

Message Summary

Our perpetual temptation is to look backwards at our past experiences, mistakes, and sins. Faith, conversely, is forward-looking. It looks at unseen future realities with certainty, as the God who created the universe leads us into them. Such a faith journey is challenging, as God's calling often exceeds our own strength. But the same God who calls us equips us through faith to do more for His kingdom than our own strength could muster.

For an example of such a faith journey, the author of Hebrews looks no farther than Abraham (Gn. 11-25), the founder Israel. At his initial calling, Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldeans, present day Iraq. God spoke personally to Abraham and called him to go to an unknown place, which God promised to show him (Hb. 11:8-10; cf. Gn. 12:1-3). Without question or objection, Abraham obeyed. He left his homeland with no permanent residence. Rather than enjoying the stability of permanence, Abraham erected tents for his children and grandchildren. He knew that wherever he resides on earth, no place on earth was his ultimate homeland. His older age (75 years old) didn't stop him – there is no retirement for God's people. Even the grief of losing his father Terah did not stop Abraham from moving forward by faith. God calls in such personal ways today – towards new works of ministry, global missions, marriage, education, career, etc. The question of us is: are we listening to God's voice, or depending on feelings or people?

Abraham was driven by his view of a "better country" (v. 16) that God Himself prepares (cf. Jn. 14:3). The city will be a life-giving city, with healing on the trees for the nations. Because we will inherit such a city, we are now able to live in any city on earth He calls us to, whether Baghdad or Mecca or Mexico City. This heavenly vision of a coming kingdom offers purpose for our lives, every step of the way. His journey of faith continued in Sarai. God commanded Sarah to have faith in God's ability to give her a child, even at 90 years old. Through Abraham and Sarah's seed came descendants outnumbering the sand on the seashore.

God has a grand narrative He is moving human history toward. Amazingly, like Abraham and Sarah, we get to be part of it. Our call remains: to walk by faith until the day our faith is sight.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Why does God call us to things that exceed our strength and power? What does He teach us? What is He accomplishing through us? See esp. 1 Cor. 1:18-31; 2 Cor. 1:8-11.

How does viewing ourselves as strangers, aliens, and foreigners keep us from loving this world as our homeland? See Phil. 3:17-21; 1 Pt. 2:11-12

Look at Galatians 3:15-29. How are all of God's promises to Abraham fulfilled in Christ? What does this teach us about God's greater plan for human history?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. Are your past mistakes, sins, or experiences preventing you from looking forward with eyes of faith? How can you better trust God's leading in unseen future realities this week?

2. How is God calling you personally? Is it a new work of ministry, global missions, marriage, education, career, evangelism, to name just a few? What can you do this week to trust, believe, and follow this calling?
3. Are you listening to God's voice, or your feelings or people around you?
4. What worldly factors keep you from fulfilling God's call? The stability of permanence, older age, entitlement?
5. Is your heart trusting in where you live or the heavenly city to come?
6. What dream is God putting in your heart to fulfill for His glory?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank Christ that by his stripes we have been healed (Is. 53:5). Thank Him for the heavenly city that even now He prepares for us.
 - Pray that the Lord would teach us to walk by faith and not sight (2 Cor. 5:7), and to trust His promises rather than our achievements.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that the Gadsden community would not find security and stability from their community or lifestyle, but rather in the sure promises of God fulfilled in Christ. Pray that we would live in this community preparing for our next home.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray that the Lord would call many from our church to new works of global missions. Pray that many nations would be reached by obedience to God's calls like to Abraham of old.