

ESF, Lord's service message  
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## The Foundation of Faith

Genesis 12:1-8

*<sup>1</sup> The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup> "I will make you into a great nation*

*and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.*

*<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you."*

*<sup>4</sup> So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. <sup>5</sup> He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.*

*<sup>6</sup> Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup> The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.*

*<sup>8</sup> From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.*

In recent years, there have been many strong earthquakes around the world- in China, in Haiti, in Japan, in Chile and in Nepal. When a strong earthquake hits, usually many buildings collapse. But the buildings with strong foundations will stand even at the time of an earthquake. Our faith also needs a strong foundation. According to what kind of foundations we build our faith on, our faith may make a big difference at the time of trials.

By today's word, we can learn how to build our faith upon a solid foundation.

### **The word**

When God called Abraham to start his life of faith, God let Abraham build his faith only upon His word. God did not show him any dreams, or miracles. God let Abraham start his journey of faith based on only His word.

Then God reminded him of the word again and again whenever his faith needed to be strengthened (Genesis 13:14-17, 15:1-7, 17:1-18). By doing so, God encouraged Abraham to build his faith upon His words.

If you think you cannot have great or solid faith in God because you have never experienced something extra-ordinary, something special, or some miracle, you have to learn from the example of Abraham. You can have strong faith if you have God's word.

The word that was the foundation of Abraham's faith was the word of promise. God's promise is the promise of blessings. What are the blessings?

First, *I will make you a great nation*. In other words God promised he would give him his own children. For Abram, a childless old man 75 years of age, that promise was a blessing, the best of all promises. Having a child was his life-long dream. But, it was an impossible dream because of Abraham's old age. But God promised him not only a child but many children to which would come a great nation.

Second, *"To your offspring I will give this land*. In those days land meant everything. Land was the most secure source of income and the foundation of life. So God was promising him a most secure life.

*Third, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*

God was promising to make him a person of great honor and a person through whom God would bless people all over the world, generation after generation.

It was impossible for Abram to have a child when he was 75 years old and his wife was barren. But God called him to be not only a father of a child but also the father of many nations.

Why did God not choose someone younger and healthier than Abram, if He wanted to make the father of all nations? Why did God not choose someone with many children to make a father of many nations?

This tells us that regardless of the human condition, a person can receive the promise of God's blessing. It means that no special human condition is necessary to receive God's blessed word of promise. By choosing a man who was childless and old, God shows that every one of us can receive His blessed promise regardless of our human condition.

Jesus did the same thing. Most of his twelve disciples were people who were uneducated, poor, lowly, and who had a sinful past. But he chose them and made them into powerful and influential leaders.

God's blessed word of promise has nothing to do with our human condition. It is given by grace. It is given as a gracious gift. Don't think that you can't live with great dreams because of your poor condition, because you have nothing to be proud of. To God nothing is impossible. By his grace, God can do something marvelous through you. God gives you promises which enable you to overcome impossible human conditions. There is a place in God's blessed promise for you, no matter what your age is, and no matter what your condition is.

When God calls you to be a believer, His promise in your life is not something small. God has a much greater plan and dream than what you have ever imagined or planned. He wants to give you a great dream and have it come true in your life. He wants to give you eternal security. He wants to make you a person of honor. He wants to bless many people through the blessings you receive in His promise. Find out the dream in God's promise. Find out the security in God's promise. Constantly build your faith upon the word of God's promise.

### **Obedience**

When God called Abram to live by faith, God told him to leave his country and his people and his father's household and go to the land He would show him. It meant that he should give up all the things which he had been familiar with and which he had built up until that time. It meant that he had to start rebuilding his new life at 75 years of age. It was a great challenge. At that old age, he needed to stay in his homeland. But God told him to leave his homeland and go to a land he had never been before.

If you have ever been in a foreign country, you understand what difficulties you have to face even when you stay for a while. You may face language barriers. You may face dangerous diseases. You may have to eat some food which you are not familiar with. In most cases in staying in foreign countries, the biggest issue is security. As a stranger, you are vulnerable to dangerous attacks.

What God was telling Abram to do was not just stay in a foreign land for a little while but leave his home land and move to a foreign land. God did not tell him which foreign land he would lead him. God did not give him any specific information of the journey he would take.

It meant that he should depend on God 100% for all his needs and security and just go to this foreign land. It meant that he should go even though he did not know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8). God encouraged Abraham to build his faith on absolute obedience.

When God wants to bless us, He builds our faith upon absolute obedience to His word.

When God calls you and gives you a blessed word of promise, He tells you to get away from things which you are familiar with, from the security you have built for many years, from your comfort zones. Then He may command you to get into unfamiliar territory, to things you have never known before.

When you think about your own condition, your own ability, you may be scared to obey His word. But when you start obeying, you will see that God who always provides you with the best.

Craig had been an alcoholic for more than a dozen years. He'd lost everything he had, including his wife and son, due to his selfishness and addiction. Things began to change after he gave his life to Christ, but he still fell regularly into his old habits.

He got a well-paying job at a local grocery store that was well stocked with all his favorite drinks. After a few years of going back and forth between Christ and the bottle, he finally cut the ties, and, out of obedience to Christ, quit his job.

With no income and hope only in Christ, he was in desperate condition. After an interview with a sheet metal company down the street from his new church, he cried out to God. "God, if you give me this job I will give you my first paycheck." Surprisingly, he got the job.

When he got his first paycheck, stacks of bills needed to be paid. He struggled for a while. But he endorsed it over to the church and walked it to the church office without waiting for the Sunday offering. That was the moment that changed his life because now he understood what it meant to trust God.

Since then, Craig has been sober for 25 years, he's a manager at that sheet metal company, and he serves as an elder at his local church.

When you obey, God makes your faith grow and become strong so that you can stand firm with faith in all trials. When you obey God He gives you the eyes of faith so that you can see His mysterious blessings with which you can't see with your physical eyes.

An aviation cadet, on a practice flight, temporarily stricken blind, in panic radioed that message to his control officer. The officer radioed back, "Follow my instructions exactly." After keeping the blinded cadet circling the field until the whole field was cleared and an ambulance had arrived, the control officer radioed: "Now lose altitude." "Now bank sharply." "You're coming onto the runway now." The cadet brought his plane to a perfect landing, was saved, and later his sight returned.

When God wants to bless you, all He is asking of you is strict obedience.

### **Worship**

When Abraham arrived at the new place God had led him, he built an altar before he did anything else. Wherever Abraham went he built altars to the Lord God (Genesis 12:7, 8; 13:18). Building an alter means worshiping God. Worship was essential part of Abraham's faith.

Worship is another key to the foundation of our faith. The reason why it is so important to put worshiping God at the center of our lives is:

First, it satisfies our deepest desire, the desire of our souls. When Abraham built an altar God appeared to him. Worshiping God is the key ingredient to bring life to our souls. Every day we must set aside time to come to our personal altar where we read His word, worship Him in song and pray. Then we will encounter God afresh and He will teach us His ways day by day.

Second, it is God's ultimate purpose for our life. God created our life to worship Him. God saves us from sin and death to worship Him. God

delivers us from the dark power of the devil to let us worship Him. Worship is the major act people in heaven do (Revelation 7:9-17).

When Einstein fled Nazi Germany, he came to America and bought an old two-story house within walking distance of Princeton University. There he entertained some of the most distinguished people of his day and discussed with them issues as far ranging as physics to human rights.

But Einstein had another frequent visitor. She was not an important person like his other guests. She was a ten-year-old girl named Emmy. Emmy heard that a very kind man who knew a lot about mathematics had moved into her neighborhood. Since she was having trouble with her fifth-grade arithmetic, she decided to visit the man down the block and see if he would help her with her problems. Einstein was very willing and explained everything to her so that she could understand it. He also told her she was welcome to come anytime she needed help.

A few weeks later, one of the neighbors told Emmy's mother that Emmy was often seen entering the house of the world-famous physicist. Horrified, she told her daughter that Einstein was a very important man, whose time was very valuable, and he couldn't be bothered with the problems of a little schoolgirl. And then she rushed over to Einstein's house, and when Einstein answered the door, she started trying to blurt out an apology for her daughter's intrusion – for being such a bother. But Einstein cut her off. He said, "She has not been bothering me! When a child finds such joy in learning, then it is my joy to help her learn! Please don't stop Emmy from coming to me with her school problems. She is welcome in this house anytime."

And that's how it is with God! From its very opening pages, all the way to the end of the book, the Bible is a story about how God has pursued us with an unchanging and unquenchable and undeserved love, because He wants us to come to His house and have fellowship with Him! And we do that in this life through worship! It's an amazing privilege.