

Faith When It Is Dark

Hebrews 11:8-9

All of us face trials. Abraham illustrates a man of strength and grace in the midst of sorrow and grief. In his eighties, God called Abram to leave his homeland of Ur and travel to a land that God would give Him.

1. The journey of Abraham from Ur to Canaan was not an easy journey.

So too, the Christian life (for Abraham is the father of all that believe) is not always an easy journey.

Abraham left his family, his homeland, his security and safety of Ur to go to a "strange land."

2. When Abraham arrived in Canaan, he lived for seventy-five years *in tents* with Isaac and Jacob.

(See Heb. 11:9 and Acts 7:4-5). Abraham died when his son Isaac was seventy-five and his grandson Jacob was fifteen, and when he died, *"he had not yet received what had been promised."*

3. Abraham's faith in God sustained him when what he saw with his eyes was only dark and bleak.

God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.

He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines of never failing skill

He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, -- the clouds you so much dread

Are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace.

Behind the frowning providence, God has a smiling face.

~William Cowper

How do you feel and experience the smiling face of God when the dark clouds of providence come?

I. When the call of God is heard, you respond in obedience to His call.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed... not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8).

There are two distinct calls: A general call and a particular call; an outward call and an inward call.

When the Word of God is proclaimed (the general call), the Spirit begins His work (the inward call).

A. The path of duty is the path of safety ... the grace of God is felt when the call of God is obeyed.

This is what the Apostle James meant when He said, "Faith without works is dead." This means that if the Spirit of God is doing an inside job on you, the grace of God is felt when you listen.

B. Our journey on the path of duty is never perfect ... it is not "I can do it as much as I will do it."

True faith is characterized by obedience; but neither our faith nor our obedience is ever perfect.

Notice the journey of Abraham to Ur. It is characterized by many mistakes made by Abraham.

A.W. Pink said, *"Instead of separating from his kindred [as God said], Abraham suffered his nephew Lot to accompany him; instead of forsaking his father's house [as God said], Terah was permitted to take the lead; and instead of entering Canaan, Abraham stopped short and settled in Haran. God therefore had to tumble Abraham out of the nest which he had made for himself."*

Yet, in spite of all this, Abram went. Don't let your mistrust of yourself stop you from beginning.

II. When people or things hinder your journey of obedience, you rest in God's providence.

"And they [Abram and Terah] went out from the Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they [Abram and Terah] came to Haran, and dwelt there. Terah died in Haran" (Gen. 11:31-32).

God told Abraham to leave all ties in Ur, including his idolatrous father. Jewish tradition teaches that Abram is considered the eldest of three sons and the only one opposed to his father's idol shop.

Terah accompanies Abram on his journey in spite of the fact that God told Abram to leave Terah.

Our Father will see we obey, even if it means he must take from us precious things (Heb. 12:5-11).

These are the dark providences of life. Do not begrudge them. The smiling face of God is shining on you.