

November 5, 2017

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message "What Does It Mean 'By Faith'?"

—Trusting in the Word of God's Promise

Text: Hebrews 11:8~6

**11:8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.**

**11:9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.**

**11:10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**

**11:11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.**

**11:12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.**

**11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.**

**11:14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.**

**11:15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.**

**11:16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.**

#### Introduction

• *Family History* is a long-lived NHK T.V. program . It started in 2008 and has continued for about 10 years until now. Some of you may watch it. It is the program to search for well known person's birth and roots. It seems to have a high audience rating.

By the way, everyone has his own history. By watching the T.V. program, many people have begun to write their personal history of life. They write the history from their birth to the present time. It may be a kind of a legacy for their future generation.

It is not just a simple writing. It records what life they lived, how many difficulties they have experienced and how they got over them. On the other hand, they can look back their life again by writing their mistakes in the past. Therefore, they begin to write *their personal history of life* with their oldest events in the past.

However, the author of the Epistle wrote Abraham's personal history of life from a different viewpoint which was *by faith*. It was not like an ordinary personal history of a human life. The term *by faith* appears at least 20 times in the Hebrews, Chapter 11. What does *by faith* mean?

Let's study from Abraham's *family story* today.

## Main Points

### 1 Abraham's Personal History of Life

#### *By faith*

**11:8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.**

Abraham is called father of faith. It is not known exactly when and how he came to believe in God. However, it is true that he had faith in God. The author of the Epistle first records his faith. What does it mean? **Genesis**

**12:1 The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.**

**12:2 "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.**

The verses above are God's blessed Word when He made a contract with Abraham. Abraham went out, as the Lord had told him, even though he didn't know where he was going. It means that he simply followed God's Word *by faith*. We come to find that faith is to follow God's Word.

It means that faith is to follow God's Word, not to judge it by our common sense. When we put our common sense before God's Word, we fail. Some people say, "Yes, the Bible says so, however, it does not sound realistic to me." Those who say so probably believe that *they know problems in this real world better than God*.

Other people say, "God says so. However, my faith is so weak that I can't follow Him." If they think so, they should pray to God to give strong faith. They should pray for a sincere faith even though it is faith like a mustard seed.

My friends. If we know what will happen in our future, we don't need to have faith. When God tells us to go, we go even if we don't know what happens. It is an attitude by faith. The attitude by faith means that God's knowledge (His Word) is the surest measure than our common sense that is formed by our knowledge and experiences. This is the way of thinking of those who live *lives by faith*. He who lives *by faith* does not appear to live a safety life. However, there is nothing more assured than a life by faith. Therefore, when God told Abraham to *go to the promised land*, he followed His Word without knowing where to go. Then, what journey did Abraham take?

### 2 ) Abraham lived in tents.

Abraham left his home without knowing where to go and lived in tents like a stranger in the promised land. Why didn't he make his home in the promised land that God promised to give? The Scripture records Abraham's life after Lot had parted from Abraham as below **Genesis**

**13:14 The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west.**

**13:15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.**

**13:16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.**

**13:17 Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."**

**13:18 So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord.**

The Bible does not record the land in detail. When he came back to the promised land from Egypt God said to Abraham as below

#### **Genesis**

**13:14 "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west.**

**13:15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.**

Abraham should have settled down according to God's Words . However, he didn't.

If Abraham had his land, he could have buried Sarai's body there. He had to buy the land of Machpelah from the Hittites. Abraham could endure the hardships of life, because he walked *by faith* that was based on the unshaken foundation. On the top of that, he had been eagerly waiting for the Kingdom of Heaven. He trusted in God who designed and built the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Hebrews**

**11:9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.**

**11:10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**

Father Abraham really lived a blessed life.

Some people say that they should not possess land or a house according to the life of Abraham. If some of them choose such a life, it may be acceptable, however they shouldn't impose their opinion upon others. If they say that living in a rented house is the faithful way to live, it is an extreme interpretation of the Bible. We are allowed to have land and a house. The question is whether we think it an eternal place or not. We should be careful about worldly possessions.

Our eternal house is not in this world. It does not concern us whether we have our own house or a rented house, a fine house or a miserable house. The most important point is our real house is in heaven. To live *by faith* means to live with such an attitude in faith. God Himself designed the city of heaven and built houses there. The houses of this world will be broken someday, but the house of heaven is perfect because God who is perfect built them.

Living in tents like a stranger in a foreign country means an inconvenient life and to have hardship. Therefore, it is natural that Christians have trouble in this world. However, we are able to endure a life in this world by hope that our houses are prepared in heaven.

The author of the Epistle records the city as "**the city with foundations**". (11:10)

The houses in heaven are with firm foundations. They are not like houses in this world that easily collapse by an earthquake. If we want to buy a firm house in this world, we need to pay considerable sum of money. However, the firm houses in heaven are guaranteed *by faith*.

We are able to live by hope (light) even though we have pain and hardship in this world.

**Abraham's Personal History of Life Is Written by Faith.**

**1 ) God doesn't think it shame.**

The reason why Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived like strangers in this world was that they were convinced that the promised land was in heaven.

**11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.**

**11:14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.**

**11:16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.**

God is not ashamed of people who lived by trusting in God's promise. We understand how God is highly pleased with people who have faith in Him.

The Scripture above are the merciful Word of God. We are so weak that we often make Him disappointed. We fail, commit sins and stray from His path. Nevertheless, He is not ashamed of those who live by trusting His Word. How happy we are!

Jesus said as below

**The Gospel of John**

**14:2 My Father's house has many rooms;if that were no so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?**

**14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**

This is the God's grace that the Bible teaches.

### **The fundamentals of life**

When we study Abraham's life, we understand that Abraham was not a perfect person.

However, he is called the *father of faith*.

For example, Abraham failed in trusting in God's will. Abraham went down to Egypt when a famine occurred in Canaan, the promised land. He forgot that Canaan was God's promised land. He also told a lie that Sarai was his sister and looked to his own safety. It showed Abraham's weakness.

Then, how about Isaac, Abraham's son? He committed same failure as his father. He said his wife Rebekah was his sister.

### **Genesis**

**26:9 So Abimelek summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say,'She is my sister'?" Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might lose my wife on account of her."**

He gave false testimony before the living God.

How about Jacob, his son? He also deceived Isaac and took Esau's blessing. We know that they have weakness like us. It is not until we have a trial in faith that we realize what our nature is.

However, they became God's chosen people and received His blessing. God was not ashamed of being their God. Why?

They were blessed because of *Abrahamic Covenant*.

We are just like them. We should honestly confess our failures and sins before God and we are forgiven by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Abraham slaughtered an animal before God and worshiped Him. Even though we repeatedly make the same mistake, **if the fundamentals of our lives is based on the faith in God' Word, we are allowed to walk before God.** God is never ashamed to be called our God. It is His grace and it greatly encourages us. How great His grace is! How happy we are!

### **Conclusion**

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We studied how we are able to live *by faith*.

We need to be faithful to God. The following two points are concrete lessons to live by faith.

- 1 . We should listen to God's Word and follow it.
- 2 . Our fundamentals of life should be faithfulness to God.

\* God bless you!