



## *Round Hill Community Church*

---

### **Sermon: August 29, 2010**

---

#### **Living Our Faith, Eddie Lopez**

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

I saw the movie “Grown Ups” last month. In one scene, the basketball coach of a junior high school team told his players who had won the championship of the middle school, “I want you to live life as you played this year, so that when the buzzer of your life sounds you have no remorse or regret.”

We too as Christians might take this advice. Today’s Scripture is a call to live a life for God. The Epistle of Hebrews tells us that this life is impossible to live without faith. The author of Hebrews does not intend to give us a definition of faith, although at first sight this does look like a definition. Hebrews is actually offering us a witness of how our ancestors lived their lives pleasing to God by faith. Notice the words that the author chooses to describe the faith of our ancestor: certainty, conviction, hope and approval, all wonderful characteristics in a human being. The author of Hebrews follows this by examples of how the people of faith in our past lived out these attributes.

Two things before we speak about these attributes.

First, faith is something God does in us and through us. Yet, at the same time, faith is something that we live out. It is what moves us to action. But this does not imply that faith is dependent on our ability to make it happen. No. Even in our human frailty we are able to experience faith and live lives pleasing to God. We could say that we cannot frustrate the will of God in our lives for the lack of faith, because God works faith in us.

Second, faith belongs to the ordinary, everyday aspects of our lives. Although we usually associate faith with church and spiritual living; although we usually think of faith as that expressed best by the giants of the Christianity; this is not what we see in today Scripture. Faith is a part of our everyday living and decision-making. So as we speak about the characteristics that make for living out our faith keep in mind we are talking about all aspects of our lives.

Hebrews wants us to see some characteristics of faith in our ancestors that would help us move toward living lives of faith. What are these characteristics? Let me mention four: 1) obedience, 2) taking risks, 3) believing the impossible, and 4) expecting great things.

1. Obedience: Although Abraham did not have any written guarantee for his or his family’s future, he trusted God and obeyed; setting out for a place not knowing where he was going. Abraham put to practice this amazing discipline of obedience. This reminds me of the words of the hymn writer:

“When we walk with the Lord, in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way.

While we do his good will, he abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey.

But we never can prove the delight of his love, until all on the altar we lay.  
For the favor he shows, for the joy he bestows, are for them who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet, we will sit at his feet, or we'll walk by his side in the way.  
What he says we will do, where he sends we will go, never fear only trust and obey."

How many of us find ourselves as Abraham facing decision making and being called to understand God's will. Someone has to decide what school to attend. Another wonders if this is the person who s/he should marry and spend the rest of their lives with. Someone might be considering relocation. Yet, another may be considering retirement. And another is facing some business decisions. In each case the decision is difficult. According to today's lesson Abraham was motivated by a desire be obedient to what God wanted for his life. So, as we face our challenges and decision-making today, we should be motivated by a quest to be obedient to God's will for our lives. It is interesting that for those who walk in the journey of faith, God is present in all aspects of our lives. Even when we face decisions that are apparently so everyday there is always a spiritual component to them. How or where is God asking you for obedience?

2. Risks: Today's scripture tells us that Abraham's faith led him to live as a foreigner, setting out for a place not knowing where he was going Abraham did not have any written guarantee for his or his family's future. He probably left a community where his family was known, where he had long-term friendships and where he had relatives. It was also a familiar place, environment, language, and culture. I'm sure these create a certain sense of security for Abraham as they would for us. He left all of this to risk an uncertain future.  
[If you allow me to digress for one second: This is true of all immigrants today. Wow, I wonder what our attitude might be for immigrants today if we thought of each of them as our Father Abraham.]  
Getting back to our topic, taking risks is not easy. But when there is hope we are motivated to take risks and live with insecure futures in order to comply with the will of God in our lives. Taking risk requires us to let go of outcomes and trust God that it will work out right. If you are like most of us this is a difficult challenge for our lives. What risks taking might God be calling you to today?

3. Believe the impossible. The lesson tells us that by faith Sarah herself received strength to conceive, even past the expected age. This was unexpected, was impossible, and for some who knows even a ridiculous idea, but not for Abraham and Sarah. For them it was an opportunity. Sometimes our journey of faith brings us to impossible task that may even seem unreasonable. Yet, at the very same time it leads to an opportunities to experience a miracle. Today in our scientific society it is so difficult to live waiting or hoping for the impossible.

The other day I heard a doctor talking about one of those occasions. I was surprised to hear him say to his colleagues , "All of us have had those cases where we cannot explain what has happened. At those times we are witnesses of a miracle, and that causes us joy."

And here the scriptures challenge us as Christians to live always waiting and looking for the impossible...the miracle. Even if it seems as our tasks are impossible we are called to keep struggling as people who believe that achieving the impossible is not beyond our reach.

4. Expect great things. In today's lesson we are told about Abraham, Sarah and Isaac, "Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." This portion reminds me of well known words of the missionary William Carey, "Undertake great things for God and expect great things of God." Carey a self-educated shoemaker, with

these words of faith helped the Baptist Church create a missionary organization. He went as a missionary to India, translated the Bible into Bengali and Sanskrit, printed the bible into 44 languages and dialects and started a college to train indigenous pastors in India. The scriptures today challenge us. I wonder what we might accomplish if as individuals and/or as a community of faith we took on great missions for God and expected great results from God?

Finally, I want us to remember that the point of this whole passage of Hebrews is that as we live out our lives of faith we do so not only for ourselves but for generations to come. Our ancestors paved the way for us that we might pave the way for those who will come after us. The Latino community sings a canticle that says "That faith may not fall, that hope may never fail us." When we sing this we do so understanding that we may not see the fruits of our work and struggle; yet we still struggle...knowing that those generations who will follow will enjoy the benefits of our work and struggle. They teach us as a community of faith to understand that our work today will last long after we are gone as a witness for generations to come.

In short, these readings today challenge us to live as the coach said to the children in the film "That when the buzzer of life rings we may have lived lives that were obedient to God; that took risks for God; that believed in the impossible and expected great things from God. May we live this life of faith today so that we may have an impact on the future of those who will follow us tomorrow. Amen.