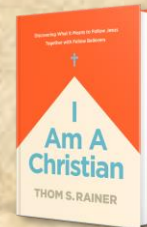


Sermon Notes: **I Am A Disciple** (Hebrews 11:1-12, Genesis 12:1-3)

Big Picture: *Exercise your faith as a disciple.*

Series Title: **I Am A Christian**



## Introduction

- **Opening Illustration:** The two key sentences of a waterskiing instructor:
  - “Don’t let go of the rope.”
  - “Let go of the rope!”
  - Point: If we don’t follow the teachings of the instructor, we will never be like the instructor (Jesus).
- **Sermon Series:** I Am a Christian
  - We all go through trying times.
  - Personally, in our country, and in our world. (Remember the pandemic?)
    - I feel like we are still white-knuckled, trying to anticipate what’s next.
    - I want to begin this message series by trying to answer the following questions:
      - **Tension:** How do we keep holding the line? How do we keep faith during this season of life?
      - To answer these questions, we will look at a key example of faith from the Bible.
    - My heart’s cry for you in this sermon is simple: You’ve got this. You’ve got this because God’s got this.
- **Today’s Focus:** We will look at a group of believers whose faith was being tested; and at Abraham, the father of our faith.
  - We are going to see people who lived out their faith with many unknowns.
  - **Big Picture:** Here’s the main takeaway from today’s message: Exercise your faith. Learn what it really means to say, “I am a disciple.”

**Transition:** The author of Hebrews is writing to a group of people living in a time and place where it has become difficult to follow God.

- Their faith is starting to waver because of the persecution they are under.
- They are being told they are crazy for following Jesus.
- We don’t experience a lot of persecution as Christians in the United States, but I will say this:
  - While you’re experiencing persecution (of any kind) is not the time to find out whether your faith is real.
  - That’s why the author of Hebrews wants his audience to understand what faith is.
  - That’s where we begin—defining faith.
  - Faith believes that God exists and that he rewards our pursuit of him.

## 1) Faith believes that God exists and that he rewards our pursuit of him (Hebrews 11:1-3, 6).

- **What the text says:**
  - Look at Hebrews 11:1-3:
    - <sup>1</sup> Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.

- <sup>2</sup> Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.
- <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.
- "Faith shows the reality of what we hope for."
  - If you made that statement to people apart from the Bible, I don't think many would disagree with it.
  - We all have faith.
    - I'm not going to try to convince you that you need faith.
    - You already have it.
      - We all hope for something that will make us happy.
      - We all believe there is a pursuit out there that will lead us to happiness.
      - Some may have lost hope in that pursuit, but we fundamentally believe that pursuit will pay off.
  - Faith, then, becomes what (or who) we are hoping for. It is "the evidence of things we cannot see."
    - When we put faith back in its proper context with God, we see that faith is what our souls long for.
    - A. W. Tozer gives a beautiful definition of faith: "Faith is the gaze of a soul upon a saving God."
    - Faith is longing for God and longing for what God promises.
    - The author of Hebrews clarifies this in verse 6:
- <sup>6</sup> It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.
  - Our faith begins as a response to God's revelation of himself to us.
  - Faith starts with believing God exists:
    - Though I wish we could go through every argument for the existence of God, we don't have time.
    - I will say this: God exists, and he has revealed himself to everyone (Romans 1:20; Hebrews 1:1-3).
    - The issue is what people do with that truth.
  - So, what does it mean that "it is impossible to please God without faith"?
    - I don't know if you've ever known someone who seemed to be impossible to please.
    - I believe many people think of God this way.
      - They see God as an impossible-to-please deity.
        - They think hard work pleases God.
        - They think religious activity pleases God.
        - They think religion pleases God.
      - But none of that matters without faith.
      - To have faith, we need to see God for who he is.
    - The other way to look at this verse is to frame it in a positive sense:
      - "We please God with our faith."
- Let's put this all together.

- When we believe that God is who he says he is—and that he’s worth it—our souls will gaze upon him. And that pleases God! That’s what it means to declare, “I am a disciple.”
- **Application:** If where your soul gazes is where your faith lies, then there’s a big question you need to answer for your life:
  - What is your soul gazing upon?
    - Where does your time go?
    - Where does your money go?
    - Where do your thoughts go?
  - When you answer that essential question, you will find where you are placing your faith.
  - Placing your faith in anything other than God will leave you unsatisfied, unfulfilled, and unsettled.

**Transition:** So you have faith in God. But what happens when your faith begins to weaken?

- It happens. Even those of us who declare “I am a disciple” have those seasons.
- If you are there, here’s what I want you to do:
  - Remember God’s calling on your life.
  - Trust God’s calling on your life.
- Let’s flip over to Genesis 12 and look at Abraham’s calling.

## 2) Faith trusts God’s calling on our lives (Genesis 12:1-3).

- **What the text says:**
  - <sup>1</sup> The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you.
  - <sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others.
  - <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”
    - Abraham’s calling was that God would make a great nation through him.
    - But at age 75, Abraham still didn’t have any children.
    - In biblical times, children were your workforce and your retirement security.
      - The more children, the more you could produce.
      - And the greater the chance that you would be taken care of when you got old.
    - For Abraham to leave his country and his family to go live in a tent with no children took a lot of trust.
      - But he had faith in God’s calling on his life.
  - What if Abraham had ignored God’s calling?
    - What if he just sat around and twiddled his thumbs?
- **Emphasis:** Your life has eternal significance.
  - Believe it. Live your life in that manner.
  - God is pulling you somewhere.
  - Hold on to the rope. Don’t let go.

- **Application:** What if you don't know what his calling on your life is?
  - 1) Remember your salvation.
  - 2) Answer this question:
    - Where has God blessed you, and what does he want you to do with that blessing?
      - marriage
      - kids
      - job
      - finances
    - Start with one of these. God promises to direct you as you go. Discover what it means to declare, "I am a disciple."
- **Emphasis:** Our calling becomes clearer when we *move* with what we know.

**Transition:** Back to Hebrews 11

- We have faith in God. We have a faith that trusts in what God has called us to do. We are his disciples.
- Here's where we end:
  - Faith takes action even in the unseen.

### 3) Faith takes action in the unseen (Hebrews 11:8-12).

- What the text says:
  - Hebrews 11 is often referred to as "the hall of faith" or "heroes of the faith."
    - In the midst of exhorting this group of people to have great faith in God, the author gives examples of people in the Old Testament who had great faith in God.
    - Let's focus on Abraham in verse 8.
  - <sup>8</sup>It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.
    - If you were to look at the other heroes mentioned in this passage, you'd notice something—they took *action*:
      - What does it say about each one?
        - Noah built
        - Abraham left
        - Isaac promised
        - Joseph commanded
        - Moses refused
      - Faith leads to action.
        - Abraham took action even when he didn't fully know what it meant.
        - "He went without knowing where he was going."
          - Even when you don't know what the future holds, move forward in what God has called you to do.
            - Have faith in him as you go.
            - That's what it means to declare, "I am disciple."
      - God showed Abraham where to go.

- But when he got there, it wasn't as if life was perfect.
  - Look at verse 9:
- <sup>9</sup>Even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise.
  - Abraham lived in a tent his entire life.
  - He was a foreigner.
  - He left his extended family behind.
  - He uprooted everything because of his faith.
    - Why? Look at verse 10
- <sup>10</sup>Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.
  - Abraham had faith in God's future promise.
  - Abraham believed the calling God put on his life.
  - Consider this quote from Albert Mohler: "Abraham framed his entire existence by living in anticipation of the fact that God would be faithful to his promises. In other words, Abraham was faithful *in the present* because of his confidence in what God would do *in the future*."
  - Look at what would happen after Abraham died:
    - <sup>11</sup>It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise.
    - <sup>12</sup>And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.
- **Emphasis:** Our faith comes from God's promises, not God's provisions.
  - Abraham never saw the complete fulfillment of God's promise, but that didn't stop him.
- **Emphasis:** Faith fails when we require earthly evidence.
- **Application:** There is no noun for "faith" in Hebrew.
  - It is only a verb.
  - In what area of life are you looking for earthly validation when God has simply called you to faith?
    - Can you hold the line even when you don't know how long or hard the journey might be?
    - Can you hold the line even when it doesn't make sense?
    - Can you hold the line even when the resources don't seem to be there?
    - Can you hold the line when it seems like your relationships are diminishing?
  - When God calls, go forward with faith.
    - Go even in the unseen. Because God is still there.
    - We don't just go and make disciples; we go because we *are* disciples.
- **Transition:** Go out from this place today with faith that God exists.
  - With faith that knows God is worth it . . .
  - With faith that knows God is working even in the unseen . . .
  - With faith that trusts what God is calling you toward.

## Conclusion

- Here's what I want you to do with your faith:
  - **Big Action:** Use it and strengthen it!
    - Let it be a muscle that gets stronger because you are falling more in love with God and with God's promises.
    - Can you imagine what that would look like for your life? For our church?
  - **Big Inspiration:** What would a church jacked up on faith look like?
    - What would a faith-pumped church do?
    - Let's be a people of faith.
    - Because everyone needs the hope of Jesus.
      - Because that's what it means to declare, "I am a disciple."