

Prayer of Preparation: *Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O lamb of God, I come, I come!* Speak Lord, your servants are listening. **Amen.**

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Paul is writing again, this time about faith. Paul is trying to define faith for a group of people who have lost their faith... There are times when defining faith seems possible to do. But Paul does it.

Paul's audience is not a church this time. Nope. This time Paul's audience is ALL Hebrews everywhere, and at all times. Paul reaches into scripture, all the way to the beginning, and brings forth the origins of faith. Why? So that he may provide the Hebrews scattered about the world a place to ground themselves. Paul wants to provide the Hebrews a place to rest in. A place to start with when they are in places which do not respect them or their beliefs. A place to teach their children about so that their children can know about who they are and whose they are. So, Paul starts in the very beginning with Abram and Sarai.

It's fitting that Paul begin at the beginning; that Paul begins with Abram because scripture teaches us that Abram was asked to leave the comfort of home, take his family, and wander about until he came to the place that God had provided. Abram was asked to move into the unknown on faith.

I want you to hear what God said to Abram in Genesis 12, *"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."* So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him.

God called Abram and Sarai out of Canaan and promised them a better country; a country in which they could worship God. God called and Abram answered. There's a whole sermon in that but today we're talking about faith... faith that gives us the courage to follow God when everything around us says nope... don't go there.

I wouldn't blame Abram if he had said no. Remember how Paul defines faith? Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. When God called Abram, all Abram had was faith that he would one day see the land God was calling him to. That was it; just faith. There were no maps. There were no tour guides. There was no compass, no GPS, no treaty, no government officials. No. Abram packed himself and his family and moved because of his faith in God and God's promises.

Paul goes on to remind the Hebrews of Moses; Moses whose parents kept him because of their own faith. Moses who had a stutter and couldn't speak. Moses the son of an Israelite, Moses a son of a Pharaoh's daughter, Moses the murderer, and Moses the herdsman. Moses who packed up his family and moved back to Egypt because he had faith in God. Moses, whose faith in God convicted him to go back to Egypt even though he would be put to death for his crime. Moses who went back to Egypt to tell the Pharaoh, *'Thus says the Lord: Let my people go, so that they may serve me...'*

Now, *that's* a faith walk... to go to the powers that be, powers that believe that *they* are God, and tell them NO! God is in heaven. God is ruler of heaven and earth **and** God says, *Let my people go, so that they may serve me.* The likelihood that Pharaoh would kill Moses and sell his family into slavery was **far** greater than the chance that Moses would walk out alive. Knowing the odds, Moses packed up his family, walked in faith, and followed where God led him.

Each one of us should have a faith story. It doesn't have to be an Abram and Moses story, but we should have a faith story. Every one of us should know that God has called us to be people of faith, people who have placed our lives into God's hands with no reason other than God called us.

God is calling each of us to journey to a better country. Just as Abram and Moses were called to a better country. Just as they were called to pack up their families, face the powers that be, and go to serve God.

Here's where today's word gets real...God did not call perfect people. God called people. Abram was very, very, very, very far from perfect. He did some things that were so far from perfect that you just have to scratch your head and say, *Him? Abram? Realllllyyyy?* And Moses???? If it were up to you or I we would NEVER have picked Moses. Moses had a stutter...most folks would have been busy laughing at him, not following him.

God calls people, God calls each of us in our own disfunction and disastrous ways to be the leaders; the ones who will reside in new countries, or new neighborhoods, the ones who will part the Sea of Reeds, the ones who will go because God called. If you're wondering who God is calling, it's you...all of you.

No one is exempt. God is waiting for you to hear God calling so that he may use your imperfections to perfect others; to lead the world to a new and better place where God's love and peace abounds.

Response to the Word: *We've come this far by faith, Leaning on the Lord, Trusting in His holy Word, He's never failed us --yet. Singin' oh, oh, oh, can't turn a-round, We've come this far by faith. May we ever be found singing, We've come this far by faith. Amen.*