

# Hebrews 11:11-12 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

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**The Epistle  
to the Hebrews**

| INSTRUCTION<br>Hebrews 1-10:18                   |  |                                  |                                      | EXHORTATION<br>Hebrews 10:19-13:25                |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Superior Person<br>of Christ<br>Hebrews 1:1-4:13 | Superior Priest<br>in Christ<br>Hebrews 4:14-10:18 |                                  |                                      | Superior Life<br>In Christ<br>Hebrews 10:19-13:25 |
| BETTER THAN<br>PERSON<br>Hebrews 1:1-4:13        | BETTER<br>PRIESTHOOD<br>Heb 4:14-7:28              | BETTER<br>COVENANT<br>Heb 8:1-13 | BETTER<br>SACRIFICE<br>Heb 9:1-10:18 | BETTER<br>LIFE                                    |
| MAJESTY<br>OF<br>CHRIST                          | MINISTRY<br>OF<br>CHRIST                           |                                  |                                      | MINISTERS<br>FOR<br>CHRIST                        |
| DOCTRINE   |  |                                  |                                      | DUTY  |
| DATE WRITTEN:<br>ca. 64-68AD                     |  |                                  |                                      |   |

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)  
(See also [MacArthur's Introduction to Hebrews](#))

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Hebrews 11:11 By [faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive \\*](#), [even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [Pistei kai aute Sarra steira dunamin eis katabolen spermatos elaben \(3SAAI\)](#) [kai para kairon elikias, epei piston egesato \(3SAMI\)](#) [ton epaggeilamenon; \(AMPMSA\)](#)

**Amplified:** Because of faith also Sarah herself received physical power to conceive a child, even when she was long past the age for it, because she considered [God] Who had given her the promise to be reliable and trustworthy and true to His word. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** It was by faith that Sarah, too, received power to conceive and to bear a son, although she was beyond the age for it, for she believed that he who gave the promise could be absolutely relied upon. ([Westminster Press](#))

**NLT:** It was by faith that Sarah together with Abraham was able to have a child, even though they were too old and Sarah was barren. Abraham believed that God would keep his promise. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** It was by faith that even Sarah gained the physical vitality to become a mother despite her great age, and she gave birth to a child when far beyond the normal years of child-bearing. She could do this because she believed that the one who had given the promise was utterly trustworthy. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** By faith Sarah herself also received power as regards the deposition of seed, and that when she was past age, because she considered Him faithful who promised.

**Young's Literal:** By faith also Sarah herself did receive power to conceive seed, and she bare after the time of life, seeing she did judge Him faithful who did promise;

**BY FAITH EVEN SARAH HERSELF RECEIVED ABILITY TO CONCEIVE: Pistei kai aute Sarra steira dunamin eis katabolen spermatos elaben (3SAAI):**

- [By faith even Sarah](#) - Ge 17:17, 18, 19; 18:11, 12, 13, 14; 21:1,2; Lk 1:36; 1Pe 3:5,6
- [Hebrews 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**HAVING FAITH WHEN**

## YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN

**Faith** (4102)(**pistis**) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. As **pistis** relates to God, it is the conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things well as the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. As faith relates to Christ it represents a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through Whom we obtain eternal salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Stated another way, eternal salvation comes **only** through belief in Jesus Christ and no other way.

For more discussion on the meaning of faith see commentary on Hebrews 11:1-2.

**Faith** is *believing* that God will keep His promises, *despite* circumstances that seem to be to the contrary! **True faith that saves one's soul** includes at least three main elements - (1) firm persuasion or firm conviction, (2) a surrender to that truth and (3) a conduct emanating from that surrender. In sum, faith shows itself genuine by a changed life. ([Click](#) for **W E Vine's** definition of **faith**)

**Spurgeon** on Sarah's **faith** - this holy woman is enrolled among these saintly ones. Her faith was not all it ought to have been, but God saw that it was true faith, and He loved it, and He wrote the record of it.

**Ability** (1411)(**dunamis**) describes achieving power and in this case speaks of supernatural power, power to achieve something one could not achieve naturally. In short **dunamis** means for the believer, power to achieve through the Lord's inherent ability (power). We should not be surprised that the **dunamis** is translated **miracle** (miracles, miraculous) some 22 times in the NT. It is power through God ability!

**THOUGHT-** In Sarah's case it resulted in the son of promise Isaac being conceived in her womb. But every believer needs this "power through God ability" provided by the Holy Spirit to grow in Christ-likeness or [progressive sanctification](#). Just as our initial new birth was supernatural and was by grace through faith, so too our daily growth in godliness is supernatural and by faith, not by our efforts to be godly! And so just as Sarah (and Abraham's faith) laid hold of the promise of a "miracle child" Isaac, so too believers by faith need to lay hold of the promise of growth in Christ-likeness. Legalists do not like this teaching and so in Galatia Jewish legalists had bewitched the believers prompting Paul to ask the believers "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected (sanctified) by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3+) Of course the answer is a resounding "No!" We began by the Spirit's "ability" we are to continue by His "ability." "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." (Col 2:6+)

**Conceive** (2602) (**katabole** from **katallo** = to throw down from **kata** = down + **ballo** = throw, cast) is literally a casting down or laying down. The original idea was the laying down of the foundation of a house.

**Katabole** is translated "to conceive," which in reality means Abraham's discharge or seed. It is used in the pass. because the seed was received by Sarah. Her conception was not only due to the natural process, but also to faith that the placement of Abraham's seed in her womb, in spite of her advanced age, result in the birth of a child according to the promise given to Abraham.

**Katabole** was a technical term for putting seed into the ground, it is also used of the role of the male in impregnating the female and there is one such use in Hebrews 11:11-note, referring to the casting in or sowing of seed, conveying the idea of begetting.

**Wuest** - The word **katabole** means originally "a throwing down," hence, here the depositing of the male seed in the womb. The sentence may be explained either, "received strength as regards the deposition of seed," to fructify it, or, "received strength for the foundation of a posterity."

**TDNT** adds that **katabole** meant "laying down" is used for, e.g., the casting of seed, human begetting, the sowing of war, and the establishment of government.

Ten of the 11 NT uses of **katabole** (there are no uses in the LXX) are in the phrase "**foundation of the world**". Here are the uses in Hebrews...

**Hebrews 4:3** (note) For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the **foundation** of the world.

**Hebrews 9:26** (note) Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the **foundation** of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

**Hebrews 11:11** (note) By faith even Sarah herself received ability to **conceive**, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised;

- [Hebrews 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GOD'S TIME IS NOT ALWAYS OUR TIME

**Proper time** (2540)(**kairos** [word study]) means a point of time or period of time, time, period, frequently with the implication of being especially fit for something and without emphasis on precise chronology. It means a moment or period as especially appropriate the right, proper, favorable time (at the right time).

**Kairos** can refer to a fixed and definite time, the time when things are brought to crisis, the decisive epoch waited for or a strategic point in time. **Kairos** speaks of a limited period of time, with the added notion of suitability ("the suitable time", "the right moment", "the convenient time"). **Kairos** refers to a distinct, fixed time period, rather than occasional moments.

**Kairos** is not so much a succession of minutes (Greek **chronos** 5550), but a period of **opportunity**. In other words, **kairos** defines the best time to do something, the moment when circumstances are most suitable, the psychologically "ripe" moment.

At 90 (**Genesis 17:17**), **Sarah** was long past the **proper time** or season for child-bearing and in fact had never been able to conceive. God enabled her, however, because of her **faith** in His promise

Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. (Genesis 21:1-3).

## SINCE SHE CONSIDERED HIM FAITHFUL WHO HAD PROMISED: epei piston egesato (3SAMI) ton epaggeilamenon (AMPMSA):

- **Since she considered** - Heb 10:23; Ro 4:20,21
- [Hebrews 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GOD IS FAITHFUL TO KEEP HIS APPOINTMENTS

Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is **faithful**;

**Spurgeon** on **considered Him faithful** - And that was good judgment, was it not? There is no mistake about that. Whatever difficulties may lie in the way, we may always know that he is faithful who has promised. You are not past age, my brother. God will bless you in seeking to do good. You are not past age, my sister. Have faith in God, and then in your old age you may bring many to the Savior's feet. He is faithful who has promised.

**Faithful** (4103) (**pistos** from **peitho** = to persuade - induce one by words to believe, have confidence) is something or someone who is worthy of faith or keeps promises and is applied to God, humans, His Word, etc

**Vincent** gives a nice summary (expanded in the discussion that follows) of the meaning of **pistos**, faithful, writing that it is used - (1), of one who shows Himself faithful in the discharge of a duty or the administration of a trust (Mt 24:45). Hence, trustworthy (2Ti 2:2). Of things that can be relied upon (2Ti 2:11). (2), Confiding; trusting; a believer (Gal 3:9; Acts 16:1; 2Cor 6:15; 1Ti 5:16) (Word Studies in the New Testament)

**Webster** says that **Faithful** means firm in adherence to whatever one owes allegiance and implies unswerving adherence to a person or thing or to the oath or promise by which a tie was contracted.

**Pistos** is used in two senses in the NT active and passive - **1) ACTIVE = trusting or believing** - This is the less frequent usage. This sense speaks of a sinner exercising faith in the Lord Jesus. In the first NT use in this sense, Jesus "said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but **believing**." (Jn 20:27) Paul instructs Timothy to "let those who have **believers** (**pistos**) as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are **believers** (**pistos**) and beloved.

Teach and preach these principles." (1Ti 6:2) When **pistos** is used in this active sense to refer to the faith which a lost sinner must place in the Lord Jesus in order to be saved, it includes the following ideas -- the act of considering the Lord Jesus worthy of trust as to His character and motives, the act of placing confidence in His ability to do just what He says He will do, the act of entrusting the salvation of his soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus, the act of committing the work of saving his soul to the care of the Lord. This means a definite taking of one's self out of one's own keeping and entrusting one's self into the keeping of the Lord Jesus. Thus Paul says "So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the **believer** (pistos)." (Gal 3:9) Using a striking contrast, Paul asks "what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a **believer** in common with an unbeliever?" (2Cor 6:15) **Luke** records that Paul "came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a **believer**, but his father was a Greek." (Acts 16:1) Note also that with regard to **believers**, they are spoken of sometimes in the Active sense (as "believers") and sometimes in the Passive (as "faithful"). The New Testament concept of **faith** includes three main elements, mutually connected and requisite, though according to circumstances sometimes one and sometimes another may be more prominent (1) a fully convinced acknowledgement of the revelation of grace; (2) a self-surrendering fellowship (adhesion); and (3) a fully assured and unswerving trust (and with this at the same time hope) in the God of salvation or in Christ. (Modified from Cremer)

**2) PASSIVE = trustworthy or faithful - which is the use here in Hebrews 11** -Here the basic idea is that of trustworthiness. In this sense **pistos** describes God, Christ, servants, His Word as faithful, reliable, worthy of belief or trust, , , dependable. Marvin Vincent adds that **pistos** used of God describes Him as "True to his own nature and promises; keeping faith with Himself and with man." Paul writes that even "if we are faithless, He remains **faithful**; for He cannot deny Himself. (2Ti 2:13-note) **Pistos** in this passive sense is used of one who shows Himself faithful in the discharge of a duty or the administration of a trust "Who then is the **faithful** and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?" Mt 24:45. Hence, **pistos** describes the one who is trustworthy "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to **faithful** men, who will be able to teach others also." (2Ti 2:2-note). Of the Word of God (which is the sense **pistos** is used in Titus 1:9) that can be relied upon "It is a **trustworthy** statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. (1Ti 3:1)"It is a **trustworthy** statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. (2 Timothy 2:11-note)In this passive sense of **trustworthy** or **faithful**, **pistos** is applied to God as fulfilling His own promises (He 10:23-note; He 11:1-note), as fulfilling the purpose for which He called men (1Th 5:24-note; 1Cor 1:9), as responding with guardianship to the trust reposed in Him by men (1Co 10:13; 1Pe 4:19-note). Christ is faithful (2Th 3:3; He 3:2-note; He 2:17-note; Rev 19:11-note) Christ as the faithful witness (Re 1:5-note; Re 3:14-note). God's and Christ's faithfulness in these verses speak not only of His essential being (faithful is Who He is), but also of His faithfulness toward us, as shown for example in the famous verse "If we confess our sins, He is **faithful** and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1Jn 1:9) In the papyri, we find the following illustrations of the use of **pistos** -- "Whom no one would trust even if they were willing to work" = confidence in the person's character and motives. "I have trusted no one to take it to her" = confidence in the ability of another to perform a certain task. Moses in turn records the following of God writing "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the **faithful** (Lxx = **pistos**) God, Who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments." (Dt 7:9) Notice the seal of assurance stamped upon God's covenant. It is backed up by His faithful character.

Sarah looked away from herself and her barrenness and her age and banked on her Faithful God for the fulfillment of his promise that she would have a child and be the mother of many nations. This didn't come easy for Sarah. In fact, when she heard God make the promise to Abraham, she laughed to herself and did NOT believe (Ge 18:12). But then God rebuked her for the laughter of unbelief, and said, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Ge 18:14,15). And the next thing we hear from Sarah is a word of exultation to God when Isaac is born. She says, God has made laughter for me; every one who hears will laugh over me... Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age. She gives God the glory for the child, and so we may assume, with the writer to the Hebrews, that God's rebuke, and the reminder that nothing is too hard for the Lord, restored Sarah's faith and caused her to hope in God.

**Steven Cole** writes that...

### **Faith overcomes insurmountable problems by God's power (He 11:11, 12).**

Abraham and Sarah were unable to conceive children. God promised them not only a son, but also nations of descendants. To underscore the promise, God changed his name from Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham ("father of a multitude"). Then God promised, "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you" (Ge 17:5, 6). But the problem was, not only were Abraham and Sarah unable to conceive children; also, they were both past the time in life when anyone normally could conceive.

There is a difficult interpretive issue in our text, reflected in the difference between the NASB, which makes Sarah the subject of the sentence, and the NIV, which makes Abraham the subject. The problem with making

Sarah the subject is that the phrase “received the ability to conceive” is literally “power for the laying down of seed” (NASB, margin), an exclusively male function. Without getting too technical, probably the sense of the NIV is correct, even though Abraham is not named in the verse (in Greek). There is a textual variant that describes Sarah as “barren.” If it is original, the sense would be, “By faith, even though Sarah was barren, he [Abraham] received power to beget ...” (A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament, Bruce Metzger [United Bible Societies], 4th ed., p. 602). The final phrase would read, “since he considered Him faithful who had promised.”

This view also alleviates another problem, namely, that in the account in Genesis 18, Sarah is rebuked for her unbelief rather than commended for her faith. When the Lord confronts her, she denies, rather than confesses, her unbelief. Probably, in spite of her initial doubt, she eventually came to believe God’s promise as Abraham did. But if Abraham is the subject of He 11:11, then the emphasis is on his faith, not on Sarah’s faith. There are two lessons in these two verses:

**A. Rather than focusing on human impotence, faith focuses on God’s power and faithfulness (He 11:11).**

In Genesis 18:14, the Lord rebukes Sarah’s unbelief with the rhetorical question, “Is anything too difficult for the Lord?” He goes on to restate the promise, that at the appointed time the next year, Sarah would have a son. She and Abraham rested on God’s faithful character. Since He promised, He would do it.

We need to be careful in applying this. It is easy to misapply promises in the Bible out of their context, and then become disappointed when God doesn’t do what we think He promised. The problem does not lie with God, of course, but with our misunderstanding of how to apply His promises.

For example, many Christians claim that if we have faith in God, He has promised to heal us from all our diseases. I have heard of these mistaken saints going to the bedside of a terminally ill Christian and accusing him of not having enough faith to be healed! That is cruel! God has not promised healing from every disease to those who believe. If He had, people of faith would live forever. I’ve never known of a faith healer that lived past 100! In fact, several prominent ones died relatively young!

At the same time, we would be wrong not to trust God to do far beyond our human abilities. Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). He is “able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20-note). Our faith is not in ourselves or in our faith, but in God who is faithful.

[\(See "B" Below\)](#) [\(Hebrews 11:8-12 The Nitty-gritty of Faith\)](#) [\(Link to all of Pastor Cole's sermons - highly recommended\)](#)

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## WHAT DOES GOD DO WHEN FAITH DOUBTS HIS PROMISES?

The writer of Hebrews leaves out part of the story of Isaac’s miraculous conception. Recall that Sarah she laughed

Genesis 18:8-15 He (ABRAHAM) took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate. 9 Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” 10 He (THIS IS THE PRE-INCARNATE LORD) said, “I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. 12 **Sarah laughed** to herself, saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” 13 And the LORD said to Abraham, “**Why did Sarah laugh**, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’ 14 “**Is anything too difficult for the LORD?** At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” 15 Sarah denied it however, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. And He said, “**No, but you did laugh.**”

God countered her skepticism with the question /a question, “**Is anything too difficult for the LORD?**” God speaks truth to turn Sarah’s doubting into faith in His promise of a son to a 90 year old woman. Think about this story for a moment - Here is a most encouraging example of faith. When Sarah first heard the promise, she doubted and laughed. But her first doubts were overcome. Ultimately God had the last laugh...for **Isaac’s** name in fact meant laughter. And later after Isaac’s birth Sarah declared “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.” (Ge 21:6)

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Hebrews 11:12 **Therefore** there was **born even** of **one man**, and him as good as **dead** at that, as many descendants AS THE



**Greek:** [dio kai aph' enos egennethesan](#), (3PAPI) [kai tauta nenekromenou](#), (RPPMSG) [kathos ta astra tou ouranou to plethei kai os e ammos e para to cheilos tes thalasses e anarithmetos](#).

**Amplified:** So from one man, though he was physically as good as dead, there have sprung descendants whose number is as the stars of heaven and as countless as the innumerable sands on the seashore. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** So from one man, and he a man whose body had lost its vitality, there were born descendants, as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, as countless as the sand upon the seashore. ([Westminster Press](#))

**NLT:** And so a whole nation came from this one man, Abraham, who was too old to have any children—a nation with so many people that, like the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** So it happened that from one man, who as a potential father was already considered dead, there arose a race "as numerous as the stars", as "countless as the sands of the sea-shore". ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** And therefore there sprang from one, and this one a dead man, even as the stars of the heaven in multitude and as the sand beside the lip of the sea innumerable.

**Young's Literal:** wherefore, also from one were begotten--and that of one who had become dead--as the stars of the heaven in multitude, and as sand that is by the sea-shore--the innumerable.

**THEREFORE ALSO THERE WAS BORN OF ONE MAN AND HIM AS GOOD AS DEAD AT THAT: dio kai aph enos egennethesan (3PAPI)**

- **And him as good as dead** Ro 4:19
- [Hebrews 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

At 99, Abraham was well beyond the age to father children apart from divine intervention (Ge 17:1,15, 16, 17; 21:1-5).

- **At age 75** (Ge 12:4) God told Abraham to go to Canaan and promised him many descendants (Ge 12:1-9).
- **At age 85** the promised son had not yet arrived and Sarah becoming impatient suggests that Abraham go into to her maid and father a child (born according to the flesh), trying to fulfill God's supernatural promise but fleshly means (Ge 16:1-3).
- **At age 86** (Ge 16:16) Abraham gets Hagar pregnant and Sarah gets jealous of the son Ishmael! (Ge 16:4-16).
- **At age 99** (Ge 17:1 - "Abram was 99") God promises Abraham a son and tells him to name him Isaac. (Ge 17:19 = "God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him")
- **At age 100** (Ge 17:17) Isaac is born (Ge 21:1-7).

**Spurgeon** on who is **him as good as dead** - Perhaps the reference is to Abraham, who was as good as dead, being so old; or to Isaac, who was as good as dead, for he was laid upon the altar, and was practically "offered up" as a sacrifice unto the Lord. There were many deaths to work against the life of faith, yet life triumphed over death after all.

**AS MANY DESCENDANTS AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE: kathos ta astra tou ouranou to plethei kai os e ammos e para to cheilos tes thalasses e anarithmetos:**

- **As many descendants** - Ge 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; Ex 32:13; Dt 1:10; 28:62; 1Chr 27:23; Neh 9:23; Ro 4:17
- **Innumerable as the sand** - Ge 22:17; 32:12; Josh 11:4; Jdg 7:12; 1Sa 12:5; 2Sa 17:11; 1Ki 4:20; Is 10:22; 48:19; Jer 33:22; Ho 1:10; Hab 1:9; Ro 4:18; 9:27; Rev 20:8
- [Hebrews 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**As many descendants as the stars** - This is clearly hyperbole which stresses the vastness of the population that would come from Abraham's loins, but even more it emphasizes the greatness of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord to give such a gracious promise.

**John MacArthur** - Your faith in Christ will influence future generations. I've been blessed with a wonderful Christian heritage. In fact, I'm the fifth generation of preachers in our family. The faith of my predecessors has had an enormous impact on my life—either directly or indirectly. I have the same responsibility they did to influence others for good, as do you.

Hebrews 11:11–12 gives a very personal example of how one man's faith influenced an entire nation. Verse 11 is better rendered: "By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise" (NIV).

God had promised Abraham that he would become the father of a great nation (Gen. 12:2). But Sarah, Abraham's wife, had always been barren, and both of them were advanced in years. At one point Sarah became impatient and decided to take things into her own hands. She persuaded Abraham to have a son by her maid, Hagar (16:1–4). That act of disobedience proved to be costly because Ishmael, the child of that union, became the progenitor of the Arab people, who have been constant antagonists of the Jewish nation.

Despite his times of disobedience, Abraham believed that God would keep His promise. God honored Abraham's faith by giving him not only Isaac, the child of promise, but descendants too numerous to count. One man's faith literally changed the world!

Similarly, the faith you exercise today will influence others tomorrow. So, be faithful and remember that despite your failures, God "is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Eph. 3:20). (Drawing Near)

**Steven Cole** writes that...

**B. Rather than focusing on answers in this life, faith trusts God to keep His word in His time (He 11:12).**

What did Abraham get in this life for his life of faith? He was uprooted from family and friends, never to see them again. If he had a house in Ur or Haran, it was his last. He lived the rest of his life in tents, moving from place to place. He lived to see Isaac, the son of the promise, born. He lived 15 years after the birth of Jacob, but he didn't see any of Jacob's sons. He did not live long enough to get even a hint of the fulfillment of God's promise to multiply his descendants as the stars or the sand. The only piece of Canaan that he owned was a burial plot. As He 11:13 states, he "died in faith, without receiving the promises." As we've already seen, Abraham's faith was focused on eternity, not on this life only.

One of the most important lessons in the school of faith is to learn that God's time is not our time. From Abraham's time frame, even though he lived for 175 years, God's promises failed. He died with one son and two grandsons, hardly an innumerable nation! But from God's time frame, the true children of Abraham, those who believe in Abraham's seed (Christ) number in the billions! From our limited time frame, certain events don't fit with God's promises. But from His time frame, He who promised is faithful.

**Conclusion**

George Muller of Bristol exemplified the nitty-gritty of a life of faith. After being a wild youth, he was converted in his early twenties. He obeyed God's call by living a life of faith and obedience. He lived in a manner that the world could not fathom. He and his wife sold all of their earthly possessions, founded an orphanage, and lived by faith alone, making their needs and those of the orphans known only to God in prayer. They often faced insurmountable problems that were overcome by faith in God's power.

In 1877, Muller was on board a ship that was stalled off the coast of Newfoundland in dense fog. The captain had been on the bridge for 24 hours when Muller came to see him. Muller told him that he had to be in Quebec by Saturday afternoon. The captain replied, "It is impossible."

"Very well," said Muller, "if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way—I have never broken an engagement for 52 years. Let's go down to the chart room and pray." The captain wondered what lunatic asylum Muller had escaped from.

"Mr. Muller," he said, "do you know how dense this fog is?"

"No, my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, Who controls every circumstance of my life."

Muller knelt down and prayed simply. When he had finished, the captain was about to pray, but Muller put his hand on his shoulder, and told him not to: "First, you do not believe He will; and second, I believe He has, and there is no need whatever for you to pray about it." The captain looked at Muller in amazement.



"Captain," he continued, "I have known my Lord for 52 years, and there has never been a single day that I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up, captain, and open the door, and you will find the fog is gone." The captain walked across to the door and opened it. The fog had lifted. (From, Roger Steer, George Muller: Delighted in God [Harold Shaw Publishers], p. 243.)

I wish I could tell you stories like that from my own experience, but I cannot. But George Muller and Abraham should challenge us to grow in the life of faith in the God who is faithful. Obey God's call to salvation by faith. Live as an alien in this world by faith. Ask God by His power to overcome the insurmountable problems you face by faith.

### **Discussion Questions**

Is the call to discipleship (following Christ) different than the call to salvation? What difference does it make?

Why is saving faith necessarily obedient faith? How would you answer the charge that this confuses faith and works?

What are some practical implications of living as a pilgrim?

How can we know if specific promises in the Bible apply directly to us today? ([Index to Pastor Steven Cole's sermons by Bible book - Highly Recommended - They read much like a verse by verse commentary](#))

## **SERMONS NOTES**

### **Hebrews 11:8-12**

These are "rough" notes - used to prepare sermon so use in "as is" condition.

Here is an interesting thought to consider in introducing these biographies of men and women of faith -- and it is something you would not normally think about when you read/study Hebrews 11. In fact we read it and think to ourselves "I could never have a faith like Noah or Abraham, etc." What we forget is that Hebrews "Hall of Faith" could also be subtitled something like "God's Hall of Reclaimed Failures!" Why would I say that? Because a study of most of the individuals in this chapter also had a significant failure of their faith. So what's the point? Perhaps you are here today and you have experienced a "faith fizzle" a spiritual "flat tire" so to speak. Well, we're glad you're here because God specializes in restoring failures as evidenced by the lives of most of these individuals. (Case in point - Abraham and Sarah unwilling to wait for God to fulfill His promise of a son - Sarah urges Abraham to go into the Egyptian maid Hagar which never should have even been in their house in the first place. The result was Ishmael, the son of the flesh! And we are still paying for Abraham and Sarah's "faith fizzle" in the form of the unresolved Middle East Arab-Israeli conflict - Arabs being descendants of Ishmael and Jews descendants of Isaac). Have you failed before? We all have! Have you been restored? All who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ are trophies of God's restoring grace! So take heart as we study these "faith biographies" and remember that while exemplary, they are not examples of perfect faith, but are examples of faith in a perfect God, a God Who is always faithful to keep His promises!

Verses 8-12 are packed with powerful truth that you could preach on and apply -- if you do too many verses, you won't be able to illustrate and apply the powerful principles in these five verses. So that is just my two cents. I am going to send this as preliminary "rough" thoughts but will send it again tomorrow with revisions and additions.

When you get to Hebrews 11 it gets so great, why?

Because for the first time we are changing from principles to people.

It's going from living by faith and seeing not only belief, but you are seeing biography.

The thing that would thrill you today is to be able to understand that if you are having a rough time there are people before you who have had a rough time and have negotiated life just like you have and they've done it successfully. It brings you great inspiration and it gives you the ability to persevere and press on when you hear that doesn't it? I mean it just thrills us when we hear these stories. Well that's what the writer is getting ready to do.

Now when we look at the first three verses of Hebrews 11 we are talking about what faith does, we are not talking about what faith is.

Hope looks forward with certainty founded on conviction. Solid conviction based on God's word.

Somebody said, "Faith makes the future present and the invisible seen."

Somebody said, "We see the invisible, hear the inaudible, touch the intangible, and do the impossible!"

That's people who have learned to walk by faith. Are you aware of the unseen and the reality of the unseen?

1 Peter 1:8 And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

You can't see Him but you can know Him and the reality of His presence in your life is something very, very beautiful. That's what faith does.

FAITH IS EXERCISED WHEN WE ARE PERSEVERING AND HANGING ON TO THE PROMISES WHEN THERE IS NO EVIDENCES OF GOD'S INTERVENTION IN OUR LIFE AND CIRCUMSTANCES. You see, the greatest demonstration of faith is not when everything is going great for you. The greatest demonstration of faith is your hanging on to the promises when God has some greater purpose that you don't understand. And you're having a tremendous testimony to the authenticity of the promises of God by the fact that you're hanging on to them by faith. Every one of these characters in Hebrews 11 are going to show that to you in bold relief today, of how beautiful faith is demonstrated in their lives

Illustration of Heb 11:3 - There was an orangutan in the zoo and the zookeeper came by and in his hand he had a Bible and in his other hand he had Darwin. Zookeeper said can you understand what you are reading? The orangutan said well, I'm a little confused. This book says I'm my brothers keeper and this one says I'm my keepers brother.

The nearest star in our very average galaxy, Alpha Centauri, is 25,000,000 miles away. Our glorious sun that fills our sky and lights our days is but a mere speck in our galaxy. The huge star Betelgeuse is 27,000,000 times larger than our sun. It would take fourteen 25,000,000-mile trips to get around that one star. All that, and yet our galaxy is only one of a hundred thousand million other galaxies. All the universe ought to do is cause you to praise God.

So faith sees creation as evidence of the existence of God and the promises which he makes, which we hang on to in the midst of life's adversities.

The writer moves from the principles of faith in v1-3 to the people of faith. He moves in Heb 11:1-3 from belief to Heb 11:4ff to biography. Last week we looked at the "BF's" and this week we will look at the "AF's" - you're asking what is he talking about? Glad you asked! BF = Before the Flood (Abel, Enoch, Noah); AF = After the Flood - beginning with Abraham.

We looked last week at Faith Worshiping (Abel), Faith Walking (Enoch) and Faith Working (Noah)

Heb 11:4 - How is Abel still speaking - 1. You have to come to God by faith. 2. You have to come to God his prescribed way, you can't come your own way. 3. And third – you can come the wrong way and it will lead to rejection on the part of God.

Heb 11:5 - Recall that the turning point of Enoch's life was age 65 when Methuselah was born and after that he walks 300 years with God - Enoch begs the question - What is the primary focus in your life today? What is the most important thing to you today? If you say anything other than your walk with God you may want to re-evaluate your priorities. Have you had any special times with the Lord this week? Enoch convicts us all for he walked for 300 years. God wants a relationship, not a performance.

Heb 11:7 - Here is a man who is addressing a culture so similar to our own that is under judgment and he is following God's instructions. He is a doer of the word. God speaks clearly to Noah and he is able, after addressing this culture with the right attitude and doing what God says, to save his own family as well as himself in the fact that God is getting ready to judge. In Noah you see faith at work.

The life of Abraham (vv 8-12) teaches us three great practical lessons about

(1) Faith obeys God's call (Heb 11:8)

(2) Faith lives as an alien in this present world (Heb 11:9-10)

(3) Faith overcomes insurmountable problems in God's power (Heb 11:11-12)

Another way to divide it would be

Heb 11:8-10 Having Faith When You Don't Know Where

Heb 11:11-12 Having Faith When You Don't Know When

**Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.**

Abraham is extolled in Scripture as “the father of all who believe” (Ro 4:11+) and is revered by over one-half the world’s population being held in high esteem by Jews, Muslims and Christians. In ancient times the Jews considered Abraham to be almost worthy of their worship. In the Bible, Abraham is presented to us as a great example of a man who lived his life by faith. James 2:23 records the fact that Abraham was called the “Friend of God.” Even the first verse in the NT begins by mentioning Abraham’s name (Mt 1:1). But remember that before he was a Friend of God” Abraham was a pagan—an absolute pagan, an idolater! Faith took him from worshipping idols to worshipping the one true and living God! To learn about faith, it makes sense to go to Abraham. He is extolled in Scripture as “the father of all who believe” (Ro 4:11-note). Genesis 12-25 chronicles his story. The apostle Paul uses Abraham as his prime example of justification by faith alone, apart from works (Romans 4; Gal. 3:6-18). He makes the startling assertion that it is not Jews by physical birth that are Abraham’s descendants. Rather, those who believe are the true children of Abraham. He says, “Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.... And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:7, 29). It is not surprising that in the great faith chapter, Hebrews 11, Abraham receives more verses than any other person. His life illustrates Heb 11:1-note, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen.” Our text reveals three essentials of faith:

Faith obeys God’s call, lives as an alien in this world, and overcomes insurmountable problems by God’s power.

Here is a guy who has a word from the Lord, that he is to leave home. So he puts a real estate sign “for sale” in his yard and before long he is out of there. They ask him where he is going and he doesn’t know

He went out - faith is coupled with obedience and leads to action. Unhesitating obedience manifest by action. Spurgeon writes that “there is no hint of hesitation, parleying, or delay. When he was called to go out, he went out.” As you have likely heard “delayed obedience is disobedience.” The Acronym “F.A.I.T.H.” REALLY FITS ABRAHAM’S RESPONSE TO GOD’S CALL - Forsaking All I Trust Him - Abraham forsook what he knew (earthly residence in Ur) to trust God enough to go to a place he did not know. In short, he trusted God’s promise.

God didn’t tell him until later that the destination was Canaan. He didn’t send color brochures picturing the bountiful harvest of the land or describing the pleasant climate. There was no home awaiting him when he arrived from the long journey. He had to leave his culture, his familiar way of life in Ur and later in Haran, his friends, his family, and his earthly inheritance. It was a long and dangerous trip, made without U-Haul or Interstate highways. But Abraham obeyed, risking everything on God’s word of promise.

SOURCE OF ABRAHAM’S FAITH - Charles Swindoll - Note that Abraham’s faith-walk began “when he was called” (Heb 11:8). His faith wasn’t founded on a subjective feeling about God’s will, a billowy cloud formation pointing like an arrow, or a vague message from a fortune-teller staring into a crystal ball. The Bible says “the Lord had spoken to him” (Gen. 12:4), and “the Lord appeared to Abram” (Gen. 12:7). This is where true faith rests—on the clear revelation of God (Ro 10:17). God’s calling to Abram was audible, objective, and specific. He responded with faithful obedience. (Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Hebrews)

Faith obeys - Genuine faith always obeys God. We are saved by faith alone, but saving faith is never alone. By its very nature, it results in obedience. If someone professes, “I believe,” but does not obey, his faith is superficial and worthless. For example, if you say, “I believe that seat belts save lives,” but do not buckle up and you’re involved in a crash, your “belief” was worthless. If you really believe that seat belts save lives, you will buckle up. Buckling up demonstrates the reality of your faith.

God just says, “Get up and go.” And he left, enrolled himself in the School of Faith.

Verses showing relationship between faith and obedience

Romans 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake,

Romans 16:26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;

John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Compare Hebrew 3:18-19 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, (SALVATION REST) but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. -- CLEARLY the writer of Hebrews links faith and obedience, unbelief and disobedience.

Jesus warned, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does (PRESENT TENSE = DIRECTION NOT PERFECTION) the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter" (Mt. 7:21).

Jesus told the Jews who claimed Abraham as their father, but sought to kill Jesus -- "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham" (John 8:39).

One could also compare salvation by faith alone (Eph 2:8-9) with good works of Eph 2:10.

BOTTOM LINE - Obedience proves that faith is genuine. Now don't get the cart (obedience) before the horse (faith) -- As the Reformer John Calvin said "Faith alone saves but the faith that saves is not alone."

Brian Bell illustrates Abraham's going without knowing (Has God ever asked you to be going but not knowing where? Get this picture in your mind of tactical military information that begins with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and goes down to the tactical level...under sealed orders. Whoever represents the "boots on the ground" may receive their orders only when they need them, or in route, as they go. So, they open their orders, and they are told where to go next. And that's the way Abraham lived. Can you trust when you can't trace? Abraham reminds us, faith frees us to venture confidently into the unknown

Abraham went out, not knowing where he was going. When God calls us to the adventure of faith, He does not furnish a road-map in advance. We have a sinking feeling of having stepped out on nothing, but then God is always doing wonderful things with nothing: He hangs the earth on nothing (Job 26:7), and calls those things which are not as though they were (Ro 4:17).

Sight rests on some thing, some where; faith rests upon someone, anywhere! (2Cor 5:7)

Dwight Pentecost makes a great point

Our faith is often tested most when our present circumstances seem completely contrary to what God has revealed to us through His Word. That is precisely the situation Abraham faced, and yet he did not succumb to "doubting in the dark what God told him in the light." Instead, he lived his life in accordance with what God had said. This essentially is the lesson of Hebrews 11.

Don't Doubt in the Dark What God Has Shown You in the Light = This is Corrie ten Boom's definition of faith. Biblical examples of those who waited on God in faith during periods of delay: Abraham waited 25 years for Isaac to be born

You can say God may be slow but He's never late. (Because His timing is perfect).

In Abraham you have FAITH WAITING.

FAITH WORSHIPPING IN ABEL,

FAITH WALKING IN ENOCH,

FAITH WORKING IN NOAH,

FAITH WAITING IN ABRAHAM.

**Hebrews 11:9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;**

We have seen that faith obeys God's call (Heb 11:8).

Now let's look at Hebrews 11:9-10 that teach us Faith lives as an alien in this present world, our present living being enabled by expectant looking to the world to come. (Heb 11:9-10) Stated another way FUTURE LOOKING enables PRESENT LIVING!

By faith - The key that unlocks the door to the land of promise. don't miss this point - it took faith to live "as an alien" in the Promised Land. And it follows that we too will have to have FAITH in God's Promises to live as "aliens and strangers" (1 Pe 2:11). Abraham walked by faith not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). Remember the context -- The writer is speaking to Hebrews, to Jews being drawn to believe in Christ. But in striking contrast to the role of faith, the rabbis had long taught that Abraham pleased God because of his works. They believed that God looked around the earth and finally found an outstandingly righteous man, Abraham, who because of his goodness was selected to be the father of God's chosen people. That false teaching needed to be corrected. It was necessary to show, from the Old Testament itself, that Abraham was not righteous in himself but was counted righteous by God because of his faith. (See Genesis 15:6) For a Jew to accept the truth that salvation is by faith, he would have to be shown that this truth applied to Abraham. The Jews were right in looking to Abraham as a great example. The problem was that they looked at him in the wrong

way. They knew that he pleased God, but they had to be shown that God was pleased with him not because of any good works he did, but because he trusted Him. The New Testament makes it clear that Abraham was the first true man of faith. Since his time, everyone who trusts in God, Jew or Gentile, is spiritually a child of Abraham. "Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7; cf. v. 29). Those who trusted God before the Flood—such as Abel, Enoch, and Noah—were only partial examples of faith. Abraham was the first established man of faith, and he is the pattern, the prototype, of faith for men of all ages.

Kent Hughes pictures it as if God promised you and your descendants the land of Guatemala. In obedience, you traveled there, but then you had to live the rest of your life in your camper! Not only you, but also your sons' families lived in their campers, moving from place to place. He goes on to point out that just after Abraham arrived in the land of promise, there was a famine that drove him from the land. But he returned and lived in the land by faith alone.

APPLICATION - The application is that as people of faith, we often must live in this world with conditions that seemingly contradict God's promises (look at Heb 11:35-39). The "health and wealth gospel" does not square with Scripture. Sometimes God's people face great adversity and trial - perhaps that describes you today. Here's a promise you can bank on

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ro 8:35, 38-39)

Abraham, the alien in a foreign land, dwelling in tents, stands in contrast with his nephew Lot, who moved to Sodom and lived in a house. Although Lot was a believer, he became tainted by the godless values of Sodom. Abraham, the alien, was involved with his neighbors in Canaan, but he always remained distinct. As pilgrims, we need to adopt the mindset of pilgrims. When you travel in a foreign country, you stand out as different. They can spot you! They know that you are not one of them. You may temporarily adopt some of their local customs, so as not to be offensive, but on most things you think and live differently, according to the customs of your homeland. As God's people, our homeland is heaven. We're just passing through this earth. Our mindset toward success, possessions, and purpose in life should be radically different than the mindset of the natives. The natives' hopes center in this life only, and so they try to accumulate all of the things and engage in all of the activities that they think will bring them happiness in this life. But pilgrims' hopes center in Jesus Christ and their eternal inheritance in Him. So they hold the things of this life loosely. They enjoy all that God provides, but their real treasures are in heaven (1Ti 6:17, 18, 19).

THOUGHT: This life is as bad as it will get for believers, but is as good as it will get from non-believers. This is their "heaven" on earth! By faith we wait for our Heaven, but it is sure, because God promised it and He is faithful to keep His promises as we learn in the story of Abraham and Sarah receiving the promised son Isaac, not in their timing but in God's perfect timing!

Jack Arnold - Abraham endured patiently in faith, knowing that God would fulfill His promise that he and his seed would possess the land forever. Abraham was 175 when he died and did not possess the land. Was God unfaithful to his promise? No, a thousand times no. God will one day raise Abraham from the dead to possess this land in the yet future millennial kingdom. Abraham died in faith without receiving the promise, but one day he will receive it because God is faithful. (Sermon)

Fellow heirs of the same promise - Promise is (1) a seed (descendants) and the "Seed" was Christ (Gal 3:16) and Gal 3:8 (quoting Ge 12:3) was the Gospel which Abraham believed in Ge 15:6. God also promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the land (Ge 12:7, Ge 13:15).

This same Greek word is used in Ro 8:17 of believers -

"And if (SINCE WE ARE GOD'S) children, (WE ARE) heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

We tend to forget that Abraham did not build a house to live in but that he lived in a tent all of his life. Put yourself in his DUSTY SANDALS FOR A MOMENT AS YOUR READ VERSE 10!

**Hebrews 11:10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**

= FAITH'S FUTURE FOCUS

As Steven Cole says "The life of faith focuses on eternity."

Abraham's faith was an expectant faith which was looking (imperfect tense = steady, patient waiting in spite of disappointment) (the

verb ekdechomai is not simply "looking" but "expectantly waiting" in sense of to welcome and middle voice speaks of his personal interest, focusing on the end-product of what is earnestly expected) beyond the temporal and enabled him to see the eternal! And it was his belief in eternity and the fact that it gripped his heart, that he was to navigate circumstances in his life that were not always the most pleasant. Paul voiced this in his letter to the Corinthians...

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor 4:16-18+)

James 5:7-8 uses ekdechomai in an exhortation to believers to be patient as they expectantly wait the return of the Lord

Therefore be patient (makrothumeo in the aorist imperative) brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits (ekdechomai in the present tense) for the precious produce of the soil, being patient (makrothumeo) about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient (makrothumeo in the aorist imperative); strengthen (sterizo in aorist imperative) your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

John MacArthur writes that "Focusing on Heaven is the best way to endure difficulties on earth. If following God's call is a challenge for us, imagine how it was for Abraham, who had no Bible, no pastor, no sermons, no commentaries, and no Christian encouragement or accountability. But what he did have was the promise of a (1) nation, (2) a land, and (3) a blessing (Gen. 12:1-3). That was enough for him. Abraham never settled in the land of promise. Neither did his son Isaac or his grandson Jacob. They were aliens, dwelling in tents like nomads. Abraham never built houses or cities. The only way he would possess the land was by faith. As important as the earthly land was to him, Abraham was patient because his sight was on his heavenly home, "the city ... whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10). He knew beyond any doubt that he would inherit that city (THAT WAS HIS FAITH), whether or not he ever saw his earthly home in his lifetime. Now applying this our lives being heavenly minded gives us the patience to continue living for the Lord when things get tough. It's the best cure for discouragement or spiritual fatigue. As Paul says to "set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). If your mind is set on Heaven, you will be enabled to endure whatever happens here.

Abraham "was looking for the city which has the foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God." (The Greek has the definite article before "foundations.") The city with the foundations stands in contrast with life in a tent, which has no foundation. Since God is both the Architect and Builder of this city, the foundations are solid and secure. It refers to the city above, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22), the eternal dwelling place of all of God's saints (Rev 21:1ff).

Abraham understood what the Apostle John saw in the Book of Revelation.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain: the first things have passed away'" (Rev. 21:1-4).

The author of Hebrews is saying that when Abraham went out from his father's country to Canaan, he was not just counting on God's promise for that piece of real estate. He was looking beyond it to the promise of heaven. God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants (Ge. 17:8) and He later gave them that land (Josh. 23:13, 14). But the land was never the final or full realization of the promise. It was only an earthly picture of the full promise, which is the eternal city that God has prepared for His people (He 11:16). Abraham viewed himself as a stranger and sojourner in the land of Canaan (Ge 23:4). His focus was on heaven, and so should ours be.

Like Abraham, we are looking for a home prepared for us by the Lord Himself THE ARCHITECT AND BUILDER. This was His promise, and faith expects Him to keep it. Faith will not be disappointed!

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. (NOTE FAITH COUNTERS A TROUBLED HEART - BUT FAITH HAS A PROMISED HOME IN THE FUTURE) 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Faith Looks For A Prepared Home – "builder and maker" – We look for a home prepared for us by the Lord Himself. This was His promise, John 14:1-3, and faith expects Him to keep it. Faith will not be disappointed!

Faith Looks For A Perfect Home – "God" – This home will be built by God and God does not make junk! The home He is preparing

for His people is a perfect land designed for a perfected people. In that land, none of the things that blemish this land will ever be found there, Rev. 21:4; Rev. 21:27. It is glorious beyond description and faith longs to be there!

Faith Looks For A Permanent Home – “foundations” – This home is not a temporary home like the tents Abraham dwelt in, or the homes we live in. That heavenly home is a permanent home, a place that will never fade away, fall away, rust away or rot away, 1 Pet. 1:4; Matt. 6:19-20. It is a permanent home, and faith longs to settle down over there!

Abraham's theme song may have been "This World is Not My Home"

This world is not my home I'm just a passing through

My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue

The angels beckon me from heaven's open door

And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

Oh lord you know I have no friend like You

If heaven's not my home then lord what will I do

The angels beckon me from heaven's open door

And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

ILLUSTRATION - HAVE YOU EVER BEGUN TO FEEL A BIT NAUSEATED WHEN A BOAT YOU ARE ON BEGINS TO MOVE OUT ON THE OPEN WATER? DO YOU KNOW WHAT SAILOR'S SAY - "JUST STARE AT THE HORIZON." EXPERIENCED SAILORS SAY THIS HELPS REGAIN A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE. The Maker of the horizon (Job 26:10) knows that sometimes in life we may become fearful and restless. We can regain perspective by focusing on the distant but steady point of our future destiny in Heaven. The writer of Hebrews understood this fear, and sensed discouragement in his readers. Persecution had driven many of them from their homes. So he reminded them that other people of faith had endured extreme trials and had been left homeless, but they were enabled by the Spirit to endure it all because they anticipated something better. As exiles, the readers and you and I can look forward to the city whose Architect is God, the heavenly country, the city God prepared for all those who believe in Jesus (Hebrews 11:10, 14, 16). So even in his final exhortations in the last chapter, the writer asked his readers to focus on God's promises. "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14). Present troubles are real but they are also temporary. We are sojourners, aliens (Hebrews 11:9), who need to make it our frequent practice to gaze at the horizon of God's promises which will provides the point of reference we need to weather the storm. Beloved, if you are experiencing some stormy seas in your life and beginning to feel a little queasy (sickly), take a moment to focus on God and His promises which are yea and amen in Christ (2 Cor 1:20KJV) and the Spirit can use this to renew your mind and calm your heart. You could pray a prayer like this - Father in the midst of the storms in my life, enable me by Your Spirit and Your Word to focus on Your promises all fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Amen

Abraham's life shows us that faith obeys God's call; faith lives as an alien in this world.

Have you ever heard the saying that some people who are so heavenly-minded that they are no earthly good. But according to the writer of Hebrews, there is a proper heavenly-mindedness like that of Abraham in Hebrews 11:10. And it was just this "future focus" or "vertical vision" (even while living horizontally) that enabled Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to live by faith as tent-dwelling nomads in Canaan (Heb 11:9-10).

In his book Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis wrote, made a statement that I think is profound (I WOULD PUT THIS ONE ON A SLIDE TO NAIL IT DOWN IN THE FOLK'S MEMORIES)

"If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The apostles themselves,...the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in.'"

If our minds are properly occupied with heaven, we cannot help but do earthly good. And even more amazing is the fact that in doing "earthly good" in the power of the Spirit and for the glory of God, we will in fact be storing up for ourselves treasures in Heaven, which we will then experience and enjoy forever and ever. That's a deal that sounds too good to be true, but it is true because God's Word promises it!

And remember Abel -- though dead he still speaks -- that can be our legacy when our occupation with heaven causes us to carry out



good works on earth. And remember what John wrote - Revelation 14:13 says about the martyrs of the Tribulation period: Their works do follow them. Your works done by abiding in Christ, empowered by His Spirit and for His glory will "follow" after you throughout the endless ages of eternity. O to have a faith as big as a mustard seed which would really believe that is true (BECAUSE IT IS TRUE!).

Here is a way to close out the first 3 verses (Heb 11:8-10)...There are many parallels with Abraham's experience and that of Christians. So let's each ask ourselves...

Do I feel at home here?

Or do I feel like a missionary, like an expatriates (one who lives outside their native country)?

Would you describe yourself as:

-- A pilgrim, a sojourner, a camper, or an alien? Or,

-- A citizen, a permanent resident, an occupant, one who's perfectly at home here?

Beloved, many God enable us to live, as Martin Luther once put it "with one foot in the air."

Paul said it well

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait (apekdechomai very similar to ekdechomai in Heb 11:10) for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Php 3:20-21)

**Hebrews 11:11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.**

We have seen that faith obeys God's call (Heb 11:8).

Then we looked at Heb 11:9-10 that teaches us Faith lives as an alien in this present world by looking expectantly for the future world.

Now we will look at a third aspect of faith -- Faith in God's promises overcomes insurmountable problems in God's power (Heb 11:11-12)

The Future Fulfillment of God's Promises

We do not yet see the future fulfillment of all God's promises. And this is a primary emphasis of Hebrews 11. God has given us promises in the Bible to cover every contingency we'll ever face. The promises of God are the most precious portions of Scripture to our souls. They are the basis of our entire life of faith. The Bible says God has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. (2 Peter 1:4). But those promises unfold with time which is what we saw with Noah and now with Abraham. They are not always instantly fulfilled; they sometimes await the day of fulfillment. They point to a moment in the future when God will do exactly as He has said. Recall what Noah had been promised by God

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. (Hebrews 11:7)

What was not yet seen? The coming flood. God promised to deal with the wickedness and evil on the earth by destroying the world with a flood. The flood came in its own timing, and its fulfillment was not yet seen when the promise was given, but Noah, by faith, built an ark for the saving of his family.

Look at Abraham

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. 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. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

What, then, is faith?

Faith is the confidence and the assurance that these unseen realities (God the Father, the Son, the Spirit, Angels, Heaven) are just as real and just as great and far more important and far more enduring than the visible circumstances we face. Read that again

- Faith is the confidence and the assurance that the unseen realities are just as real and just as great and far more important and far more enduring than the visible circumstances we face.

This is a fantastic thing to understand. Yes, we have problems. We have challenges. We have a society descending into atheism and moral chaos. We have a reversal of values. We have Christianity attacked by anti-faith forces, and we have problems of every kind. We have personal problems. We have financial problems. We have family problems. We have physical problems. We never know what a day may bring. We're hit by bad news, sometimes devastating news, and we're in danger of shrinking back and losing heart. But we do not lose heart because we live by unseen realities. WE LIVE BY FAITH - PAUL EXPLAINED IT THIS WAY

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day-by-day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal.

We see God the Father. We see God the Son. We see God the Holy Spirit. We see Heaven. We see the angels that populate the heavens and surround the earth. We see the promises of God and their unseen but unstoppable fulfillment. And these unseen realities are just as real and far more impacting than the negative realities that surround us day by day. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and confident of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. This is what God expects of us— as individuals and as a church.

He expects us to have the common sense of recognizing that what we see is not all there is. There is an unseen world, and we should base our attitudes and actions on the reality of that unseen world. We should fix our eyes, not on what is seen but on what is unseen. We have terrible problems and challenges, but we must fix our eyes on the unseen realities of God, including all of His promises, and persevere. We must not lose heart. We must be renewed day-by-day. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

**Hebrews 11:12 Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.**

At age 75 (Ge 12:4) God told Abraham to go to Canaan and promised him many descendants (Ge 12:1-9).

At age 85 the promised son had not yet arrived and Sarah becoming impatient suggests that Abraham go into to her maid and father a child (born according to the flesh), trying to fulfill God's supernatural promise but fleshly means (Ge 16:1-3).

At age 86 (Ge 16:16) Abraham gets Hagar pregnant and Sarah gets jealous of the son Ishmael! (Ge 16:4-16).

At age 99 (Ge 17:1 - "Abram was 99") God promises Abraham a son and tells him to name him Isaac. (Ge 17:19 = "God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him")

At age 100 (Ge 17:17) Isaac is born (Ge 21:1-7).

AT AGE 75 GOD PROMISED ABRAHAM MANY DESCENDANTS BUT NOT UNTIL 25 YEARS LATER DID GOD GIVE HIM THE SON OF PROMISE!

REMEMBER THE GREAT WORDS OF ISAIAH 40:31 -

Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength;  
(MORE LITERALLY THIS MEANS THEY WILL EXCHANGE THEIR STRENGTH FOR HIS STRENGTH!!!)  
They will mount up with wings like eagles,  
They will run and not get tired,  
They will walk and not become weary.

Parents trying to get pregnant...trust God for this. I believe it is still God who opens & closes the womb. God is in control of every child birth.

WHAT DOES GOD DO WHEN FAITH DOUBTS HIS PROMISES?

The writer of Hebrews leaves out part of the story of Isaac's miraculous conception. Recall that Sarah she laughed

Genesis 18:8-15 He (ABRAHAM) took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate. 9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent."

10 He (THIS IS THE PRE-INCARNATE LORD) said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. 12 Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" 13 And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?'" 14 "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." 15 Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."

God countered her skepticism with the question /a question, "Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" God speaks truth to turn Sarah's doubting into faith in His promise of a son to a 90 year old woman. Think about this story for a moment - Here is a most encouraging example of faith. When Sarah first heard the promise, she doubted and laughed. But her first doubts were overcome. Ultimately God had the last laugh...for Isaac's name in fact meant laughter. And later after Isaac's birth Sarah declared " "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." (Ge 21:6)

GOOD WAY TO END - What, then, is faith? Faith is the confidence and the assurance that these unseen realities are just as real and just as great and far more important and far more enduring than the visible circumstances we face. This is a fantastic thing to understand.

Yes, we have problems. We have challenges. We have a society descending into atheism and moral chaos. We have a reversal of values. We have Christianity attacked by anti-faith forces, and we have problems of every kind. We have terrible personal problems. We have financial problems. We have family problems. We have physical problems. We never know what a day may bring. We're hit by bad news, sometimes devastating news, and we're in danger of shrinking back and losing heart. But we do not lose heart because we live by unseen realities. Biblical examples of those who waited on God in faith during periods of delay:. Abraham waited 25 years for Isaac to be born

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day-by-day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Cor 4:16-18)

SO BROTHERS AND SISTERS - DON'T LOSE HEART!

We see God the Father. We see God the Son. We see God the Holy Spirit. We see Heaven. We see the angels that populate the heavens and surround the earth. We see the promises of God and their unseen but unstoppable fulfillment. And these unseen realities are just as real and far more impacting than the negative realities that surround us day by day.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT TODAY? ARE YOU LOOKING AT THE THINGS THAT CAN BE SEEN? OR YOU LOOKING AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN AND CAN ONLY BE SEEN WITH EYES OF FAITH? AND REMEMBER IF YOUR LEVEL OF FAITH IS DROOPING BEGIN TO DAILY GET IN THE WORD SO THAT THE WORD CAN GET INTO YOU AND THE SPIRIT WILL USE THAT WORD TO GROW YOUR FAITH FOR AS PAUL SAYS "FAITH COMES BY HEARING AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF CHRIST." (Ro 10:17).

Don't Doubt in the Dark What God Has Shown You in the Light =

Corrie ten Boom's definition of faith.

She also wrote the following..

Look around and be distressed.

Look inside and be depressed.

Look at Jesus (our Hope) and be at rest."

ILLUSTRATION - George Muller of Bristol exemplified the nitty-gritty of a life of faith. After being a wild youth, he was converted in his early twenties. He obeyed God's call by living a life of faith and obedience. He lived in a manner that the world could not fathom. He and his wife sold all of their earthly possessions, founded an orphanage, and lived by faith alone, making their needs and those of the orphans known only to God in prayer. They often faced insurmountable problems that were overcome by faith in God's power.

In 1877, Muller was on board a ship that was stalled off the coast of Newfoundland in dense fog. The captain had been on the bridge for 24 hours when Muller came to see him. Muller told him that he had to be in Quebec by Saturday afternoon. The captain replied, "It is impossible."

"Very well," said Muller, "if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way-I have never broken an engagement for 52 years. Let's go down to the chart room and pray." The captain wondered what lunatic asylum Muller had escaped from.

"Mr. Muller," he said, "do you know how dense this fog is?"

"No, my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, Who controls every circumstance of my life."

Muller knelt down and prayed simply. When he had finished, the captain was about to pray, but Muller put his hand on his shoulder, and told him not to: "First, you do not believe He will; and second, I believe He has, and there is no need whatever for you to pray about it." The captain looked at Muller in amazement.

"Captain," he continued, "I have known my Lord for 52 years, and there has never been a single day that I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up, captain, and open the door, and you will find the fog is gone." The captain walked across to the door and opened it. The fog had lifted.