

# Hebrews 11:8-10 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

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**The Epistle  
to the Hebrews**

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

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

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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](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [Pistei kaloumenos](#) (PPPMSN) [Abraam upekousen](#) (3SAAI) [exelthein eis topon on emellen](#) (AAN) [lambanein](#) (PAN) [eis kleronomian, kai](#) [exelthen](#) (3SAAI) [me epistamenos](#) (PPPMSN) [pou erchetai](#). (3SPMI)

**Amplified:** [Urged on] by faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went forth to a place which he was destined to receive as an inheritance; and he went, although he did not know or trouble his mind about where he was to go. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

**NLT:** 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. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the summons to go out to a place which he would eventually possess, and he set out in complete ignorance of his destination. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** By faith Abraham, while he was being called, obeyed to go out into a place which he was about to be receiving as an inheritance, and he went out, not troubling his mind as to where he was going.

**Young's Literal:** By faith Abraham, being called, did obey, to go forth to the place that he was about to receive for an inheritance, and he went forth, not knowing whither he doth go;

BY FAITH ABRAHAM, WHEN HE WAS CALLED OBEYED BY GOING OUT TO A PLACE WHICH HE WAS TO RECEIVE FOR AN INHERITANCE: [Pistei kaloumenos](#) (PPPMSN) [Abraam hupekousen](#) (3SAAI) [exelthein](#) (AAN) [eis topon on emellen](#) (3SIAI) [lambanein](#) (PAN) [eis kleronomian](#):

- **Abraham** - Ge 11:31; 12:1, 2, 3, 4; Josh 24:3; Neh 9:7,8; Isa 41:2; 51:2; Acts 7:2, 3, 4
- **Which he was to receive** - Ge 12:7; 13:15, 16, 17; 15:7,8; 17:8; 26:3; Dt 9:5; Ps 105:9, 10, 11; Ezek 36:24
- **Obeyed by going out** - He 11:33; 5:9; Ge 22:18; 15:5; Mt 7:24,25; Ro 1:5; 6:17; 10:16; 2Cor 10:5; Jas 2:14, 15, 16; 1Pe 1:22; 3:1; 4:17

## HAVING FAITH WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE

### Key Words in Hebrews:

**Faith** - 33x in 31v - Heb 4:2; 6:1, 12; 10:22, 38, 39; 11:1, 3, 4 (2x), He 11:5, 6, 7 (2x), He 11:8, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 39; 12:2; 13:7

**Faithful** - 6x in 6v - Heb 2:17; 3:2, 5, 6; 10:23; 11:11

**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 (Josh 24:2) 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.

**Adrian Rogers** - I cannot—look at me—I cannot emphasize enough the importance of faith. We’re not talking about something that is incidental. Remember that Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” Without faith, it is impossible to please Him. Now, you want to please God, don’t you? I’ve told you before, if you please God, it doesn’t matter whom you displease; and, if you displease God, it doesn’t matter whom you please. And there is no way to please God without faith. We’re not talking to you about things that are incidental. Faith is the mark of a Christian. Christians were called believers before they were called Christians.

**By faith** - His faith was expressed in his obedience to the call and so once again we see the clear link between faith (Ge 15:6) and obedience (Heb 3:18; 3:19-notes). Abraham was saved by faith alone but the faith that saved him showed itself to be genuine by his obedience. Our obedience does not save us but it does demonstrate that our faith is saving faith.

**Spurgeon** - What a mighty sway faith has over a man, and how greatly it strengthens him. Faith was to the patriarch his authority for starting upon his strange journey, an authority that enabled him to defy alike the worldly wisdom that advises and the worldly folly that scoffs. Perhaps they said to him, “Why will you leave your relatives, Abraham?” but he replied, “God bids me.” That was a sufficient warrant for him; he needed no further argument. This also became to him the guide of his steps. If any said, “But, strange old man, how can you journey when you do not know the way?” He replied, “I go where the Lord bids me.” Faith found in God chart, compass, and polestar, all in one.

**Thomas Watson** - Abraham was a great self-denier. He left his kindred and country and was willing to travel to any place where God would have him. Whence was this? It was from his faith. Hebrews 11:8, "By faith Abraham obeyed and went out, not knowing where he went." He who believes that Christ and heaven are his—what will he not relinquish for Christ's sake? The stronger a Christian's faith is, the more eminent will his self-denial be. (See his full article on the believer's [Duty of Self Denial](#))

**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)

**MacArthur** - There are only two ways to live. One way, by far the most common, is to live by sight, to base everything on what you can see. This is the empirical way. The other way, far less common, is to live by faith, to base your life primarily and ultimately on what you cannot see. The Christian way, of course, is the faith way. We have never seen God, or Jesus Christ, or heaven, or hell, or the Holy Spirit. We have never seen any of the people who wrote the Bible or an original manuscript of the Bible. Though we see the results of them, we have never seen any of the virtues that God commands or any of the graces that He gives. Yet we live in the conviction of all these things by faith. We bank our earthly lives and our eternal destiny on things which we have never seen. That is

the way the people of God have always lived....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..(MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Hebrews)

**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**)

## FAITH LEADS TO OBEDIENCE

**Wuest** - The words "When he was called" are the translation of a present participle which speaks of action going on at the same time as that of the leading verb, which is "obeyed." The translation is "Abraham, while he was being called, obeyed." It indicates Abraham's immediate obedience to God's call. The words "to go out" are to be construed, not with "called" but "obeyed." They specify that in which his obedience was shown. The idea is, "when he was called, obeyed to go out" ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

**MacArthur on he was called** - In the Greek, **he was called** is a present participle, and the translation could be, "when he was being called." In other words, as soon as he understood what God was saying, he started packing. It was instant obedience.(Ibid)

**Jerry Bridges** - Faith is not only necessary to salvation, it is also necessary to live a life pleasing to God. Faith enables us to claim the promises of God—but it also enables us to obey the commands of God. Faith enables us to obey when obedience is costly or seems unreasonable to the natural mind.

**Obeyed** (5219) (**hupakouo** from **hupó** = agency or means, under + **akoúo** physical hearing and apprehension of something with the mind - **akouo** gives us our English *acoustics* - the science of design which helps one hear) (Click study on noun hupakoe) literally means to **listen or hear under** with attentiveness and by implication to respond positively to what is heard. **Hupakoo** means literally acting under the authority of the one speaking and implies really listening with a readiness to be fully compliant, to execute (obey) what is requested or ordered. The sense is that one understands and responds accordingly.

Note that **hupakouo** implies an inward attitude of respect and honor, as well as external acts of obedience. Obedience on the part of children consists in listening to the advice given by parents. In Genesis 22 Isaac's willingness to be offered as a sacrifice is a model of such submission while Abraham's obedience was evidence of the genuineness of his faith (see Ge 22:1,2,3 - note his unhesitating obedience to God's command).

**James** uses Abraham's example to teach this same principle in a passage that many unfortunately misinterpret as at odds with the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone...

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," (Ge 15:6) and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. (Jas 2:21, 22, 23-note, Jas 2:24-note)

The idea of **hearing** is a key idea in Hebrews...

Hebrews 2:1 (note) For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what **we have heard**, lest we drift away from it.

Hebrews 3:7 (note) Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU **HEAR** HIS VOICE, & DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS

Hebrews 3:15 (note) while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU **HEAR** HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

Hebrews 4:7 (note) He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU **HEAR** HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

Hebrews 5:9 (note) And having been made perfect, He became to all those who **obey** (literally "**hear under**", listen attentively **hupakouo** = hupo + akouo) Him the source of eternal salvation,

Hebrews 5:11 (note) Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of **hearing**.

Hebrews 11:8 (note) By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed (literally "**hear under**", listen attentively **hupakouo** = hupo + akouo) by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

**Inheritance** (2817) (**kleronomia** from **kleros** = lot + **némo** = give or distribute) is literally that which is distributed by lot and so refers to a portion which one receives by lot in a general distribution and then, in a more general sense means to possess oneself of, to receive as one's own, to obtain. In other words it can refer to a property already received as well as one that is expected. Although **kleronomia** is an inheritance which one receives by lot, in the NT the idea of chance associated with the lot is not found.

**Spurgeon** - When men emigrate, they wish to know the nature of the country in which they are to live. If it is a richer country than their own, although it is with some reluctance, they spread the sail and speed across the waters. It may be, after they have settled there a little while, their mother country is almost forgotten, and they find a settled dwelling place in their adopted land. But Abraham knew nothing of the country to which he was about to move; he had simply God's promise that it should be his **inheritance**. **Prudent consideration of consequences is superabundant, but the spirit that obeys, and dares all things for Christ's sake—where is it?** The Abrahams of today will not go out from their kindred; they will put up with anything sooner than risk their livelihoods. If they do go out, they must know where they are going, and how much is to be picked up in the new country.

**Brian Bell** - James said faith without works is dead? or, Faith w/o deeds is useless(NIV). James 2:20 meaning, if there is true faith, there will be consequent actions. Inward faith always leads to outward evidence. Faith assumes, presumes, supposes, & presupposes obedience. Let's look at the next section of Faith's Role Models...It wasn't perfect faith. With each of these characters & examples, they all lacked faith at other times. So don't be disheartened.

**John Henry Jowett** writes that...

ABRAM began his journey without any knowledge of his ultimate destination. He obeyed a noble impulse without any discernment of its consequences. He took "one step," and he did not "ask to see the distant scene." And that is faith, to do God's will here and now, quietly leaving the results to Him.

**Faith** is not concerned with the entire chain; its devoted attention is fixed upon the immediate link.

**Faith** is not knowledge of a moral process; it is fidelity in a moral act.

**Faith** leaves something to the Lord; it obeys His immediate commandment and leaves to Him direction and destiny.

And so faith is accompanied by serenity.

"He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa 28:16KJV)—or, more literally, "shall not get into a fuss." He shall not get into a panic, neither fetching fears from his yesterdays nor from his to-morrows. Concerning his **yesterdays** faith says, "Thou hast beset me behind." Concerning his to-morrows faith says, "Thou hast beset me before." (Ps 139:5) Concerning his to-day faith says, "Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me." (Ps 139:5-note) That is enough, just to feel the pressure of the guiding hand. (Daily Meditation)

**C H Spurgeon** - ABRAHAM'S FAITH was of the most eminent order, for he is called the Father of the Faithful. Let us rest assured that nothing but repeated and fiery trials could have trained his faith to so great a strength as that which it exhibited in his preparation

to slay his son at the command of God. This true Jerusalem blade was long annealed before it gained its marvelous edge and matchless temper. Men come not to their perfect stature except by years of growth. Stars cannot reach the zenith of the heavens by one sudden flash, nay even the sun himself must climb to his meridian. Trials are the winds which root the tree of our faith. They are the trainers, drilling God's young soldiers, and teaching their hands to war and their fingers to fight. Foremost among Abraham's trials was that of being called away to a land which he had never been; as this may be our trial also, I pray that my words may be adapted to our present condition. ([The Call of Abraham](#))

**F B Hole** - Abraham's faith was so exceptional that the Apostle Paul speaks of him as "the father of all them that believe" (Ro 4:11-note); so it is not surprising that in this chapter more is said as to him than of any other individual. What is said seems to fall under three heads. First, the faith that led him to respond to the call of God at the outset. He started forth from a city of civilization and culture without knowing where he was going. When he did know it proved to be a land of less culture than the one he had left. Yet all this mattered not. Canaan was the inheritance God had chosen for him, and he moved at the call of God. GOD was before his soul. That is faith! ([Hebrews](#))

**AND HE WENT OUT NOT KNOWING WHERE HE WAS GOING: kai exelthen (3SAAI) me epistamenos (PPPMSN) pou erchetai (3SPMI):**

### **ABRAHAM CALLED TO BE GOING BUT NOT KNOWING**

**He went out** - faith is coupled with obedience and leads to action. Unhesitating obedience manifest by action.

**MacArthur** points out that "Giving up the old life is one of the greatest obstacles to coming to Christ, and is also one of the greatest obstacles to faithful living once we are in Christ. From the perspective of the old life and the old nature the new life in Christ can appear dull and unexciting. When we think this way we fail to understand that, once we become a Christian, we are given a new set of values, interests, and desires—which we cannot experience in advance. We cannot "see" the blessings and satisfaction of life in Christ before we trust Him as Lord and Savior. We believe and then we experience. We must first be willing to "go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come" (Heb. 13:13). Often the reproach is all we are able to see at first. We look forward to the "city which is to come" by faith. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Hebrews)

**Spurgeon** writes that "there is no hint of hesitation, parleying, or delay. When he was called to go out, he went out. Would to God that such conduct were usual, indeed, universal; with many, the call alone is not enough to produce obedience. "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt 22:14). The Lord's complaint is, "I called out and you refused me" (Prov 1:24). Such calls come again and again to many, but they turn a deaf ear to them; they are hearers only, and not doers of the word (James 1:22). Worse still, some are of the same generation as that which Zechariah spoke of when he said, "They turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from listening" (Zech 7:11). Even among the most attentive hearers, how many there are to whom the word comes with small practical result in actual obedience. Abraham was prepared for instant obedience to any command from God; his journey was appointed, and he went. He was bidden to leave his country, and he left it; to leave his friends, and he left them all. Gathering together such substance as he had, he exiled himself that he might be a sojourner with his God, and took a journey in an age when traveling was infinitely more laborious than now. He did not know the road that he had to take, nor the place to which his journey would conduct him; it was enough for him that the Lord had given him the summons. Delayed obedience is disobedience. I wish some Christians, who put off duty, would remember this. Continued delay of duty is a continuous sin. If I do not obey the divine command, I sin. Every moment that I continue in that condition, I repeat the sin. This is a serious matter. If a certain act is my duty at this hour, and I leave it undone, I have sinned; but it will be equally incumbent upon me during the next hour. And if I still refuse, I disobey again, and so on till I do obey.

**Brian Bell** illustrates Abraham's **going** without **knowing** - 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?

**Spurgeon** on **not knowing** - That is, surely, the very masterpiece of faith. God bade Abraham go forth from his native land; he believed that God knew where he was to go, though he did not himself know. He left the direction of his wanderings entirely in the Lord's hands, and obeyed, and "went out, not knowing where he was going." We are not to ask for full knowledge before we will be obedient to the will of the Lord; but we are to obey God in the dark, even as Abraham did. He was self-exiled from his home—a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Yet, when called of God, it mattered not to him where he was bidden to go. He seemed to say,

"Appoint my way, great God. It is for me not to ask the reason why, but to obey your command."

**Knowing** (understand)(1987) ([epistamai](#) from **epi** = over + **histemi** = to stand) means to possess information about something with the implication of understanding of the significance of such information. The [present tense](#) indicates that Abraham was in the dark in that he did not know where, but he was willing to walk in the light of God's promises.

**Epistamai** literally means **standing upon**, referring to gaining knowledge by prolonged acquaintance. For the believer, this careful observation builds on the fact Scripture is the Word of God. In short, we stand (so to speak) on the promises of God. Abraham the promise but not the place promised. But God's promises was enough for him to go out of his homeland.

**Wuest** - The word "**knowing**" is the translation, not of *ginosko* or *oida*, the usual words for knowing, but of **epistamai** which means "to put one's attention on, to fix one's thoughts on, to know." Abraham's faith was so great, that he was not particularly concerned as to what the nature of the country was. His faith displaced all worry as to his future in that country. He did not trouble to think upon the matter. Expositor's says: "The faith of Abraham appeared in his promptly abandoning his own country on God's promise of another, and the strength of this faith was illustrated by the circumstance that he had no knowledge where or what that country was. ... It was, therefore, no attractive account of Canaan which induced him to forsake Mesopotamia, no ordinary emigrant's motive which moved him, but mere faith in God's promise. 'Even still the life of faith must be entered on in ignorance of the way to the inheritance, or even what the inheritance and rest in each one's particular case will be, and of the experiences that the way will bring. This is true even of ordinary life' (Davidson)." ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

**Not knowing where** - He did not even know where the land was that he was going to receive "as an inheritance" but He did know Who had called him out of Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham like all men and women of faith saw the eternal even while living in the temporal (2Co 4:18) and thus he possessed the firm assurance of things that he hoped for and the conviction a promised land he not yet literally seen (Heb 11:1-note). Abraham did not possess any information about the place God had called him to...no Maps, no guides to the best bed & breakfasts, the best tours to take, etc...this was not a vacation but an evacuation so to speak. Abraham is a convicting, clear example of faith that obeys God and is not dependent on sight for follow through! (2Co 5:7).

**F B Meyer - By faith Abraham ... went out, not knowing whither he went.** Whither he went, he knew not; it was enough for him to know that he went with God. He leaned not so much upon the promise as upon the Promiser: he looked not on the difficulties of his lot—but on the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God; Who had deigned to appoint his course, and would certainly vindicate Himself.... Ah, glorious faith! this is thy work, these are thy possibilities! contentment to sail with sealed orders, because of unwavering confidence in the love and wisdom of the Lord High Admiral: willingness to arise up, leave all, and follow Christ, because of the glad assurance that earth's best cannot bear comparison with heaven's best.

**C H Spurgeon -**

ONE is struck with the practical character of this verse. Abraham was called, and he obeyed. There is no hint of hesitation, parleying, or delay; when he was called to go out, he went out. Would to God that- such conduct were usual, yea, universal; for with many of our fellow-men, and I fear with some now present, the call alone is not enough to produce obedience. "Many are called, but few are chosen." The Lord's complaint is "I called and ye refused." Such calls come again and again to many, but they turn a deaf ear to them; they are hearers only, and not doers of the word: and, worse still, some are of the same generation as that which Zechariah spake of when he said, "They pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear." Even among the most attentive hearers how many there are to whom the word comes with small practical result in actual obedience. Here we are in midsummer again, and yet Felix has not found his convenient season. It was about midwinter when he said he should find one, but the chosen day has not arrived. The mother of Sisera thought him long in coming, but what shall we say of this laggard season? We can see that the procrastinator halts, but it were hard to guess how long he will do so. Like the countryman who waited to cross the river when all the water had gone by, he waits till all difficulties are removed, and he is not one whit nearer that imaginary period than he was years ago. Meanwhile, the delayer's case waxes worse and worse, and, if there were difficulties before, they are now far more numerous and severe. The man who waits until he shall find it more easy to bear the yoke of obedience, is like the woodman who found his faggot too heavy for his idle shoulder, and, placing, it upon the ground, gathered more wood and added to the bundle, then tried it, but finding it still an unpleasant load, repeated the experiment of heaping on more, in the vain hope that by-and-by it might be of a shape more suitable for his shoulder. How foolish to go on adding, sin to sin, increasing the hardness of the heart, increasing the distance between the soul and Christ, and all the while fondly dreaming of some enchanted hour in which it will be more easy to yield to the divine call, and part with sin. Is it always going to be so? There are a few weeks and then cometh harvest, will another harvest leave you where you are, and will you again have to say, "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"? Shall God's

longsuffering mercy only afford you opportunities for multiplying transgressions. Will ye always resist his Spirit? Always put him off with promises to be redeemed to-morrow? For ever and for ever shall the tenderness and mercy of God be thus despised? Our prayer is that God of his grace may give you to imitate the example of Abraham, who, when he was called, obeyed at once.

The sad point about the refusals to obey the call of the gospel is that men are losing a golden opportunity, an opportunity for being numbered amongst the choice spirits of the world, amongst those who shall be blessed among men and women. Abraham had an opportunity, and he had grace to grasp it, and at this day there is not on the beadroll of our race a nobler name than that of "the father of the faithful." He obtained a supreme grandeur of rank among the truly great and good: far higher is he in the esteem of the right-minded than the conqueror blood-red from battle, or the emperor robed in purple. He was an imperial man, head and shoulders above his fellows. His heart was in heaven, the light of God bathed his forehead, and his soul was filled with divine influences, so that he saw the day of the Lord Jesus and was glad. He was blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth, and was made a blessing to all nations. Some of you will never gain such honor, you will live and die ignoble, because you trifle with Supreme calls, and yet, did you believe in God, did you but live by faith, there would be before you also a course of immortal honor, which -would lead you to eternal glory. Instead thereof, however, choosing the way of unbelief, and neglect, and delay, you will, I fear, one day awake to shame and to everlasting contempt, and know, to your eternal confusion, how bright a crown you have lost. I am in hopes that there are some among you who would not be losers of the crown of life; who desire, in fact, above all things, to obtain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and to them I shall speak, and while I speak; may the Holy Spirit cause every word to fall with power. ([Abraham's Prompt Obedience to Call of God](#))

Vance Havner comments that...

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-note).

**Neither does faith know why**. Habakkuk wondered: "O Lord... why?" (Hab 1:2, 3). So did Job. God did not give them explanation but revelation, and when they saw God they did not need explanation. When we see **whom**, the **why** does not matter.

**Faith does not know what**. Peter was concerned about John: "**What** shall this man do?" Our Lord never explains the **whats**: "**What** I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7).

**But one thing faith does know**: "I know **whom** I have believed." (2Ti 1:12-note) He knows the **wheres**, **whys**, and **whats**: "He knoweth the way that I take" (Job 23:10-note). Sight rests on some thing, some where; faith rests upon someone, anywhere! (2Cor 5:7) (Consider Jesus)

#### Related Resources:

- Relationship of faith and obedience
- Obedience of faith - Roman 1:5, 16:25 - What does it mean?(Ro 1:5, 16:25)

**Oswald Chambers** writes "**Will you go out without knowing?** - Have you been 'out' in this way? If so, there is no logical statement possible when anyone asks you what you are doing. One of the difficulties in Christian work is this question—'What do you expect to do?' You do not know what you are going to do; the only thing you know is that God knows what He is doing. Continually revise your attitude towards God and see if it is a going out of everything, trusting in God entirely. It is this attitude that keeps you in perpetual wonder—you do not know what God is going to do next. Each morning you wake it is to be a 'going out,' building in confidence on God. "Take no thought for your life, . . . nor yet for your body" (Mt 6:25-note Lk 12:22) —take no thought for the things for which you did take thought before you 'went out.' Have you been asking God what He is going to do? He will never tell you. **[Ed Note:** I would argue this statement -- maybe I misunderstand what OC means to imply but this statement might be debated scripturally - e.g., Amos 3:7, Ge 12:1, 15:9 etc) God does not tell you what He is going to do; He reveals to you Who He is. (He does this also Heb 11:27-note Jn 14:21) Do you believe in a miracle-working God, and will you go out in surrender to him until you are not surprised an atom at anything He does? Suppose God is the God you know Him to be when you are nearest to Him, what an impertinence worry is! Let the attitude of the life be a continual 'going out' in dependence upon God, and your life will have an ineffable charm about it which is a satisfaction to Jesus. You have to learn to go out of convictions, out of creeds, out of experiences, until, so far as your faith is concerned, there is nothing between yourself and God." [And one might add as shown in this verse of Abraham, Faith



equates with Obedience to God].

**Oswald Chambers** - The way of Abraham in faith - He went out, not knowing whither he went. Hebrews 11:8. In the Old Testament, personal relationship with God showed itself in separation, and this is symbolized in the life of Abraham by his separation from his country and from his kith and kin. To-day the separation is more of a mental and moral separation from the way that those who are dearest to us look at things, that is, if they have not a personal relationship with God. Jesus Christ emphasized this (see Luke 14:26). Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One Who is leading. It is a life of faith, not of intellect and reason, but a life of knowing Who makes us 'go'. The root of faith is the knowledge of a Person, and one of the biggest snares is the idea that God is sure to lead us to success. The final stage in the life of faith is attainment of character. There are many passing transfigurations of character; when we pray we feel the blessing of God enwrapping us and for the time being we are changed, then we get back to the ordinary days and ways and the glory vanishes. The life of faith is not a life of mounting up with wings, but a life of walking and not fainting. It is not a question of sanctification; but of something infinitely further on than sanctification, of faith that has been tried and proved and has stood the test. Abraham is not a type of sanctification, but a type of the life of faith, a tried faith built on a real God. "Abraham believed God."

**John Owen** says that "Abraham wholly committed himself to the power, faithfulness, goodness, and direction of God without having the least encouragement about the place he was going to."

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**Going Places** By faith Abraham ... went out, not knowing where he was going. (Hebrews 11:8, NASB)

When you make a radical commitment to follow God, you'll go where you've never been before! If you're still looking at the same ground ten years later, you're going in circles. God said to the Israelites, "You have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward" (Deuteronomy 2:3). Today, God's saying to you, "Take the car out of park, put it in gear, and let's go!" Learn from your crisis, glean from the experience—but let's get going! Abraham didn't have to know where he was going—God did. All Abraham had to do was focus on his relationship with God, and everything else fell into place.

Helen Keller was asked, "Is anything worse than being blind?" She replied, "Yes, to have sight but no vision." Steven Covey, author of *The Seven Secrets of Highly Successful People*, said, "The risk of riskless living is the greatest risk of all." Don't end your life wishing you'd stepped out and followed God—go ahead and do it! You won't be rewarded for "well said"—you'll be rewarded for "well done" (see Matthew 25:21). Your dream will always be tested; its value is in how much you're willing to pay for it. Abraham was willing to give up everything and go where he'd never been. How about you? (Bob Gass)

ARE YOU WILLING? IF YOU ARE, IT CAN ALL BEGIN TODAY!

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**Building A City** - For 41 years, New York's Empire State Building enjoyed the distinction of being the world's tallest building at 1,250 feet. Since then, others have passed it, including the 1,483-foot Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and the 1,670-foot Taipei 101 building. The 2,657-foot Burj in Dubai to be completed in late 2008 will surpass those by far.

From ancient times, man has tried to distinguish himself through monuments of all kinds. It is still the dream of many today.

The writer to the Hebrews presents a better way to achieve significance. He noted that heroes of the faith never lost sight of the fact that they "were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). As a result, "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them" (He 11:16).

It is a fact of life that every monumental work will likely be surpassed. Even man's biggest "successes" are fleeting. Our best efforts can bring only temporary honor, which all too soon will be eclipsed by the new and greater achievements of others. But those who invest their efforts in living to please God have a lasting city and an everlasting honor to look forward to. God is even now preparing these for them.

Who is building your life? You or God? — C. P. Hia ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

True greatness does not lie with those  
Who strive for worldly fame;  
It lies instead with those who choose  
To serve in Jesus' name. —D. De Haan

**A solid foundation gives strength to a building and a life.**

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**Spiritual Barrenness** - Abraham had the faith to leave his homeland and settle in an unfamiliar land (Heb 11:8, 9). But even though

God had given him a promise that He would make of him "a great nation" by giving him offspring as numerous as the sand on the seashore (Gen. 12:1, 2), his wife Sarah remained barren for many years (Ge 16:1).

Because of this, Abraham took Sarah's suggestion to have a child with her servant Hagar (Ge 16:2, 3, 4). But God reaffirmed His promise that He would give Abraham and Sarah a son of their own (Ge 17:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22). They had to learn to wait by faith for God to fulfill His promise (Ge 21:1, 2, 3; Heb 11:11).

Believers in Christ face a similar test of faith. We know that God wants to produce spiritual offspring through us, but we may be spiritually barren--sometimes after years of knowing the Lord as Savior and trying to witness for Christ. It's as if we say, "I am barren. I cannot have children." We may become discouraged and have such little faith that we won't even witness to others.

Speaking out for Christ is ultimately a matter of faith. The same God who promised Abraham he would have a child has told us to proclaim the gospel (Mt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8). As we do that, we can trust Him for the results. — David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Will you be bold in your witness  
By giving lost sinners God's Word?  
Jesus will honor your service,  
And sinners will surely be stirred. --Bosch

**We sow the seed, but God gives the harvest.**

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**Our Home Is Ahead** - Now that I'm getting closer to the end of life's journey, I'm thinking more like a transient. I suppose it's natural. Abraham first described himself as "a foreigner and a visitor" when he was buying a burial plot for Sarah (Genesis 23:4). Time and death make you think about such things.

Most elderly believers say the same thing: There's no home for us this side of heaven. Like Pilgrim in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, once we've caught sight of the Celestial City we can never be content with anything less. Like Abraham, we look for a city whose builder is God (Hebrews 11:10).

In Tolkien's *The Lord Of The Rings*, as Frodo and the other hobbits set out on their great adventure, they sing, "Home is behind, the world ahead." But for Christians, it's the other way around: The world is behind; our home is ahead.

There are no valleys of weeping there, for "God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4-[note](#)). That promise makes the present journey easier to endure.

Put another way, it's the hope of going home that keeps me going. I can hardly wait to get there! — David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I have a home in heaven above,  
From sin and sorrow free,  
A mansion which eternal love  
Designed and formed for me. —Bennett

**The more you look forward to heaven,  
the less you'll desire of earth**

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**The Leap** - During a baseball game in the summer of 2006, Boston Red Sox centerfielder Coco Crisp made a spectacular play. David Wright of the New York Mets hit a ball toward left centerfield. The ball was moving away from Crisp as he raced after it. Just as it began to fall to the ground, Crisp dove headlong toward it. With his body flying through the air, he stretched his gloved hand as far as possible—and caught the ball. Some called it the best catch they had ever seen.

What were his thoughts as the ball sliced through the air? Crisp said, "I didn't think I could get there. I decided to go for it. I took a leap of faith."

In Hebrews 11, we read of what Abraham discovered "by faith." God called him to leave his country and family and go "to a land that I will show you" (Ge. 12:1). By faith, Abraham obeyed.

Is God calling you to do something difficult? Perhaps to take a missions trip to help people in need. Or to witness to someone throwing her life away with bad decisions. Or to show kindness and love in a relationship that needs encouragement. If you aren't

sure you can do it, ask God to help you. Then, trusting your loving heavenly Father, dive toward that goal. It could be the best play of your life. — Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We who love Jesus are walking by faith,  
Not seeing one step that's ahead;  
Not doubting one moment what our lot may be,  
But looking to Jesus instead. —Fields

**When God presents you with a challenge,  
take a leap of faith.**

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**A Lifelong Journey** (READ: Hebrews 11:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16) - The trip from Magadan, Siberia, to Grand Rapids, Michigan, seemed to take forever. In actuality it took 30 hours, four stops, three different airplanes, and one border entry.

After a while, I was tired of the journey. The seat became uncomfortable. The drone of the engines was distracting. The airports all started to look alike. What helped me to endure it was focusing on the end of the trip--my arrival home.

Yet my journey across nine time zones was nothing compared with travel in the 1800s. Back then, it took several days to go from New York to Philadelphia. The voyage from England to the Far East took many weeks.

The journey to spiritual maturity is also a long one, but it's no faster today than it was in the first century. No new technology can shorten the trip. It's easy to grow impatient. When the way is difficult and dangerous, we tire. It seems as if there is no rest for our weary souls.

That's why we must be like Abraham, who focused on the promised destination (Heb. 11:8, 8, 10). We need to keep our spiritual eyes on the "heavenly country" that awaits us (He 11:16), and our Lord who has gone before us (Heb 12:2). When we remember where we are going and that Christ awaits us, we can endure anything along the way. — David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Let us then be true and faithful,  
Trusting, serving every day;  
Just one glimpse of Him in glory  
Will the toils of life repay. --Hewitt

**Keep your eyes on the prize.**

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**Shenandoah (Read Ge 12:1-9)** - My grandfather grew up on the North American frontier and raised his family on a dairy farm. To pass the time, he often sang songs while he worked. "Shenandoah" was one of his favorites:

O Shenandoah, I long to hear you,  
Away, you rolling river,  
O Shenandoah, I long to hear you,  
Away, I'm bound away,  
'Cross the wide Missouri.

That song reflects the love the pioneer songwriter had for the Shenandoah River. Yet he felt compelled to leave its beauty and go west. His love for the familiar rooted him, but the pull of something better won his heart.

When Abraham was called out of Ur to follow God to the Promised Land, he had to leave everything that was familiar to him (Ge 12:1). Despite the idolatry of that pagan city (cf Josh 24:2), Abraham had probably grown attached to the comfort of his home, the variety of the food, and the fellowship of his friends. But Abraham left the familiar to follow God's leading: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go" (Heb. 11:8).

When we experience God's call to another place, it may mean leaving behind the people and the things we love. But when we're obedient to God, He will provide something even more fulfilling at our new destination. — Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Fulfillment on life's journey comes  
When we in faith obey

The leading of our loving God—  
He'll not lead us astray. —Sper

**You don't need to see the way  
if you follow the One who is the Way.**

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**Plodders For God** - In the Bible, the life of faith is often described as a walk (Ge 17:1; Ps. 84:11; Mic. 6:8; Ro 8:1note; Gal. 5:25). For most of us, our Christian pilgrimage involves plodding, a pace that sometimes feels unspiritual and unproductive. My dictionary defines plodding as "making one's way slowly and perseveringly."

Two of God's earliest plodders, Abraham and Sarah, trusted God's promises even though they had to wait many years for those promises to be fulfilled (Heb. 11:8, 9, 10, 11, 12).

Another example of productive plodding is William Carey. A shoemaker by trade, Carey became a scholar, a linguist, and the father of modern missions. He lived by this motto: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." In old age, he made one thing clear, however: "If, after my removal, anyone should think it worth his while to write my life, I will give you a criterion by which you may judge of its correctness. If he gives me credit for being a plodder, he will describe me justly. Anything beyond this will be too much." Then he added, "I can plod. . . . To this I owe everything."

Are you fulfilling your God-given responsibilities patiently by faith, or do you feel like giving up? God wants you to be a purposeful plodder. — Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Day by day perform your mission,  
With Christ's help keep at your tasks;  
Be encouraged by His presence—  
Faithfulness is all He asks. —Bosch

**The world crowns quick success;  
God crowns long-term faithfulness.**

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**Into The Unknown** - One of the greatest obstacles we face in following Christ is fear of the unknown. We yearn to know in advance the outcome of our obedience and where He is taking us, yet we are given only the assurance that He is with us and that He is in charge. And with that, we venture into the unknown with Him.

Abraham modeled the response of a person who is willing to walk with God into an uncertain future. "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8).

Abraham knew that God had called him and had given him a promise—and that was enough. He was willing to entrust his future to the Lord.

We may do the same by trusting our Lord for the future and stepping out in faith. As we stand on the threshold of a new year, may this prayer of faith and anticipation be ours:— David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord God, who has called us, Your servants,  
To ventures of which we cannot see the ending,  
By paths as yet untrodden,  
And through perils unknown,  
Give us faith to go out with good courage,  
Not knowing where we go  
But only that Your hand is leading us  
And Your love is supporting us. Amen.

**Venture into the unknown with faith in God.**

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**Serving With Limitations** (READ: Hebrews 11:8-19) - When he was not yet 4 years old, Itzhak Perlman was stricken by polio, making him unable to use his legs. But he compensated for that loss by devoting himself to his violin. In the years that followed, he

delighted multitudes of people with his music. He lost the use of his legs but his music gave him wings. What an inspiring example of devotion!

Some of God's servants have shown a similar devotion to their Lord. They have suffered the loss of certain abilities but have been inspired to develop other capacities for service. For example, when William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, discovered that he was going blind, he did not surrender to despair. With a positive outlook, he told his colleagues that he had served Christ while he could see, and he would do his utmost to serve Him even when blind.

What motivates Christians to keep on serving and following Jesus to the best of their ability despite loss or hardship? Like Abraham, we live by faith. We look beyond this life and wait "for the city . . . whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). It's "a better . . . heavenly country" (He 11:16).

May the Holy Spirit empower us to glorify Christ—no matter what our limitations.— Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Give me, Savior, a purpose deep,  
In joy or sorrow Thy trust to keep;  
And so through trouble, care, and strife,  
Glorify Thee in my daily life. —Bell

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### **Circumstances that imprison us cannot limit God's work through us.**

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**Our Dwelling Place** - When Abraham was 75 years old, God called him to leave the land of his father. And so, advanced in years, he departed for the land of Canaan. He was rootless, homeless, "not knowing where he was going" (Heb 11:8). That was the story of Abraham's life.

Age brings change and uncertainty. It means transition from a familiar past to an uncertain future. It can mean movement from a family home to a smaller place, to a daughter's home, to a retirement village, to a nursing home—the "final resort." Like Abraham, some of us make our way from one location to another, always traveling and not knowing where we're going.

Yet we can be at home in any dwelling, for our safekeeping lies not in the place where we live but in God Himself. We can dwell "in the secret place of the Most High" and "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1). There, in His presence, under His wings, we find refuge (Ps 91:4). The eternal God becomes our dwelling place (Ps 91:9).

Though our dwelling place here on earth may be uncertain, God will be our companion and friend until our traveling days are over and we reach our heart's true home—heaven. Until that day, let's shed the light of God's lovingkindness on other travelers. — David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Someday my earthly house will fall—  
I cannot tell how soon 'twill be;  
But this I know—my All in All  
Has now a place in heaven for me. —Crosby

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### **For the Christian, heaven is spelled H-O-M-E.**

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**To Be Continued** - Do you like continued stories? Let's say you're reading a magazine article or watching a television program for half an hour, and you come to the place where the hero plunges into the water to rescue his drowning sweetheart. Then you're left hanging in the air with the words: "To be continued." How disappointing! I have quite a different response to the inscription on the tombstone of a follower of Christ. It reads:

#### **"To Be Continued Above."**

Yes, this life is but the first chapter of the book of life. Whether that chapter is long or short—it is not the end, but it is to be continued. For the believer, it will be continued in heaven with our Lord. There is no break between the chapters; you don't have to wait till next month's installment or tune in next week to hear the concluding episode. Chapter two follows chapter one without interruption. It is continued immediately, for "to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord" (2Co 5:8).

What will the next chapter be for you? It will be written sooner or later, either in heaven or in hell. Remember, when your time comes to die, that is not the end. Your story is "to be continued"—but where? — M. R. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Life's fleeting days will soon be o'er  
When death ends all that's gone before;  
Yet life in Christ continues still,  
For all who lived to do His will. —DJD

**Death is the last chapter of time,  
but the first chapter of eternity.**

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**Octavius Winslow** (Evening Thoughts) - OCTOBER 16. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went." Hebrews 11:8

The entire spiritual life of a child of God is a life of faith—God has so ordained it; and to bring him into the full and blessed experience of it, is the end of all His parental dealings with him. If we desire to see our way every step of our homeward path, we must abandon the more difficult though more blessed ascent of faith; it is impossible to walk by sight and by faith at the same time—the two paths run in opposite directions. If the Lord were to reveal the why and the why of all His dealings—if we were only to advance as we saw the spot on which we were to place our foot, or only to go out as we knew the place where we were going—it then were no longer a life of faith that we lived, but of sight. We shall have exchanged the life which glorifies, for the life which dishonors God. When God, about to deliver the Israelites from the power of Pharaoh, commanded them to advance, it was before He revealed the way by which He was about to rescue them. The Red Sea rolled its deep and frowning waves at their feet; they saw not a spot of dry ground on which they could tread; and yet this was the command to Moses— "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." They were to "walk by faith, not by sight." It had been no exercise of faith in God, no confidence in His promise, no resting in His faithfulness, and no "magnifying of His word above all His name," had they waited until the waters cleaved asunder, and a dry passage opened to their view. But, like the patriarchs, they "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but were strong in faith, giving glory to God." Have little to do with sense, if you would have much to do with faith. Expect not always to see the way. God may call you to go out into a place, not making known to you where you go; but it is your duty, like Abraham, to obey. All that you have to do is to go forward, leaving all consequences and results to God: it is enough for you that the Lord by this providence says, "Go forward!" This is all you may hear; it is your duty instantly to respond, "Lord, I go at Your bidding; bid me come to You, though it be upon the stormy water."

"Having begun in the Spirit," the believer is not to be "made perfect in the flesh;" having commenced his divine life in faith, in faith he is to walk every step of his journey homewards. The moment a poor sinner has touched the hem of Christ's garment, feeble though this act of faith be, it is yet the commencement of this high and holy life of faith; even from that moment the believing soul professes to have done with a life of sense—with second causes—and to have entered upon a glorious life of faith in Christ. It is no forced application to him of the apostle's declaration: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." ([EVENING THOUGHTS or DAILY WALKING WITH GOD](#))

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**Streams in the Desert...**WHITHER he went, he knew not; it was enough for him to know that he went with God. He leant not so much upon the promises as upon the Promiser. He looked not on the difficulties of his lot, but on the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, who had deigned to appoint his course, and would certainly vindicate Himself. O glorious faith! This is thy work, these are thy possibilities; contentment to sail with sealed orders, because of unwavering confidence in the wisdom of the Lord High Admiral; willingness to rise up, leave all, and follow Christ, because of the glad assurance that earth's best cannot bear comparison with Heaven's least.—F. B. Meyer

It is by no means enough to set out cheerfully with your God on any venture of faith. Tear into smallest pieces any itinerary for the journey which your imagination may have drawn up.

Nothing will fall out as you expect.

Your guide will keep to no beaten path. He will lead you by a way such as you never dreamed your eyes would look upon. He knows no fear, and He expects you to fear nothing while He is with you.

The day had gone; alone and weak  
I groped my way within a bleak  
And sunless land.  
The path that led into the light  
I could not find! In that dark night  
God took my hand.  
He led me that I might not stray,

And brought me by a new, safe way  
I had not known.  
By waters still, through pastures green  
I followed Him—the path was clean  
Of briar and stone.  
The heavy darkness lost its strength,  
My waiting eyes beheld at length  
The streaking dawn.  
On, safely on, through sunrise glow  
I walked, my hand in His, and lo,  
The night had gone.—Annie Porter Johnson

“He went out, not knowing whither he went.” (Heb. 11:8)

IT is faith without sight. When we can see, it is not faith, but reasoning. In crossing the Atlantic we observed this very principle of faith. We saw no path upon the sea, nor sign of the shore. And yet day by day we were marking our path upon the chart as exactly as if there had followed us a great chalk line upon the sea. And when we came within twenty miles of land, we knew where we were as exactly as if we had seen it all three thousand miles ahead.

How had we measured and marked our course? Day by day our captain had taken his instruments and, looking up to the sky, had fixed his course by the sun. He was sailing by the heavenly, not the earthly lights.

So faith looks up and sails on, by God’s great Sun, not seeing one shore line or earthly lighthouse or path upon the way. Often its steps seem to lead into utter uncertainty, and even darkness and disaster; but He opens the way, and often makes such midnight hours the very gates of day. Let us go forth this day, not knowing, but trusting.—Days of Heaven upon Earth.

“Too many of us want to see our way through before starting new enterprises. If we could and did, from whence would come the development of our Christian graces? Faith, hope and love cannot be plucked from trees, like ripe apples. After the words ‘In the beginning’ comes the word ‘God.’ The first step turns the key into God’s power-house, and it is not only true that God helps those who help themselves, but He also helps those who cannot help themselves. You can depend upon Him every time.”

“Waiting on God brings us to our journey’s end quicker than our feet.”

**The opportunity is often lost by deliberation.**

(Cowman, L. B. Streams in the Desert (118). Los Angeles, CA: The Oriental Missionary Society. 1925)

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**F B Meyer THE PILGRIM OF THE UNSEEN...**

"The Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee .... And I will bless thee, and make thy name great." Gen. 12:1-2.

THE CLUE to the beginning of this chapter is given in various parts of the Bible. From Acts 7:2, 3, 4, 5, we learn that the Call to Abram to go forth, which originally came in Ur of the Chaldees, was repeated in Haran, after his father's death. Probably Terah delayed his son's obedience. Let us help our children to realize God's call, even though we be left lonely on the other side of the river.

In Hebrews 11:8, we realize that this Pilgrim of the Eternal stepped out on the wide expanse of the desert, only learning his course day by day; he was like a Columbus, sailing month after month through unknown seas, never knowing at what moment the dim outline of the shore might appear.

In Rom. 4. we are told that these promises were vouchsafed to him while still a Gentile. Thirty years passed before he became the founder of the Hebrew nation. The Apostle therefore argues that these promises are guaranteed to all his children, not only to those under the Law, but also to us who have his faith (Gen. 12:16). Turn back, my reader, to that ancient page, and realize that it includes thee in its amplitude of blessing! Gal. 3:8, 9, 14, assures us that all these blessings are included in the one gift of the Holy Spirit. The blessing of Abraham is for all of us who are in Christ Jesus, as we walk in the steps of this great Pilgrimage.

A vast gulf of Time lies between us and the far-away days of Abraham's life; but recent discoveries have shown that Ur of the Chaldees enjoyed a high State of civilization a thousand years before his exodus. His experiences and ours meet across the gulf of ages!

**PRAYER** - O God, may the great cloud of witnesses, who have trodden the Pilgrim Way before us, be to us an example of a godly

## **Steven Cole - Hebrews 11:8-12 The Nitty-gritty of Faith** ([Link to Pastor Cole's sermons - highly recommended](#))

Webster defines nitty-gritty as “what is essential and basic: specific practical details” (Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary [Merriam Webster], p. 800). If it is impossible to please God without faith (He 11:6-note), then we need to be clear on the essentials or basics regarding faith. Our text reveals some of the nitty-gritty of faith.

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.

### **1. Faith obeys God’s call (He 11:8).**

**“By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed....”**

In Genesis 12:1, 2, 3, God called Abram to leave his country, his relatives, and his father’s house, and to go to the land that God would show him. Genesis 12:4 records Abram’s response: “So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him.” God called; Abraham obeyed.

#### **A. God’s call initiates our obedience.**

Before God called Abram, he lived in Ur of the Chaldees, in what today is Iraq. He was a pagan in a pagan city, descended from a line of idolaters (Josh. 24:2). He was about 70 when God called him. While people lived longer then than they do today, he was not a young man. We are not sure exactly how God called Abraham, but Stephen (Acts 7:2) states, “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.” Apparently, Abraham obeyed God by leaving Ur, but he settled in Haran for a few years until his father died. Then God issued the call of Genesis 12, and Abraham again obeyed by moving on to Canaan.

But the point is, Abraham did not concoct on his own the idea of moving to Canaan. He was not following his own dream. He was following God’s call. God’s call was primary; Abraham’s obedience was a response. This teaches us that we should not act on our own, apart from God’s word. Faith must rest on His revelation in Scripture. Christianity is not a faith based on the religious speculations or philosophies of men, but rather on God’s revelation, recorded in Scripture (2Pet. 1:20, 21-note).

The word call or calling is used often in Scripture with regard to salvation, in two different ways. Sometimes it refers to God’s general call to everyone to repent and believe the gospel. In this sense, Jesus said, “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Mt 22:14).

But also it is used in a more specific sense to refer to what theologians label, “effectual calling.” Paul uses it this way in Romans 8:30-note, “and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” In a similar manner, he wrote that God “has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity” (2Ti 1:9-note; see also, Gal. 1:15; 2Th 2:13, 14; He 9:15-note; 1Pet. 2:9-note; 2Pet. 1:3-note). When God calls His elect effectually, He works through His Spirit to draw them to faith in Christ (John 6:44).

It was in this effectual sense that God called Abraham to follow Him. He did not issue the call to the entire city of Ur, and not even to Abraham’s father or brother. He called Abraham specifically, and responding to this effectual call, Abraham obeyed.

#### **B. Obedience is the response of faith.**

**“By faith Abraham ... obeyed.”**

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.

Genuine saving faith is obedient faith. Paul refers to it as “the obedience of faith” (Ro. 1:5-note; Ro 16:26-note; see John 3:36, NASB). Jesus warned, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter” (Mt. 7:21-note). He told the Jews who claimed Abraham as their father, but sought to kill Him, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham” (John 8:39). Obedience proves that faith is genuine.

Abraham’s obedient faith caused him to go “out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Heb. 11:8). 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.

Obedient faith abandons all to follow Jesus Christ. When Jesus called Levi, the tax collector, to follow Him, Levi “left every-thing behind, and got up and began to follow Him” (Luke 5:28). The call to follow Jesus is identical with the call to salvation: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). In the context, Jesus is talking about gaining or losing one’s soul for eternity.

Sometimes a person must make a break with family, as painful as that is. Jesus said, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26). He did not mean that we should despise or needlessly alien-ate our families. The Bible commands us to honor our parents and to love our families. New Christians especially need to be sensitive and show respect to family members who oppose the faith. But Jesus did mean that if our closest loved ones stand between us and Him, our choice is clear: We must follow Him.

Sometimes, even those from Christian homes face subtle or even direct pressure not to follow Christ fully. Sometimes parents want their children to get high-paying jobs (which excludes most Christian service). Some parents don’t want their children to go to the mission field, because they want them and the grandchildren nearby. But the Lord makes it clear: If it comes to love for Him versus love for family, we must follow Him.

God’s call often entails other difficulties. Remember, by God’s call, I’m not referring to some special call for service that comes only to some. I’m referring to God’s call to salvation. It may result in rejection or persecution. It will involve bringing all your possessions and money under His lordship (Luke 14:33). It requires obeying God’s Word when it’s inconvenient and difficult. It means seeking God’s will rather than your will in every decision.

Have you done that? You may be thinking, “That’s risky!” But actually it’s riskier to run your own life than it is to obey God’s call by faith. God knows everything about you. He is committed to work all things together for good for those who love Him and are “called according to His purpose” (Ro 8:28-note; note, called). If you’re calling the shots, you don’t know what is best in every situation, and you have no ability to control the outcome of things. But God always knows what is best and He has the power to work it out for your ultimate good. Imitate Abraham, who by faith obeyed God’s call.

## **2. Faith lives as an alien in this world (He 11:9, 10).**

### **A. The life of faith is a pilgrim life (He 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.” This is the only verse in the Bible that refers to Canaan as the promised land. The irony is, Abraham, the heir to the promised land, never owned a foot of ground in it (Acts 7:5), except for the Cave of Machpelah, which he had to buy at full cost to bury his wife.

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 (Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul [Crossway], 2:97).

John Calvin asks, “Where was the inheritance which he had expected? It might have indeed occurred instantly to his mind, that he had been deceived by God” (Calvin’s Commentaries [Baker], He-brews, p. 279).

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. The application is that as people of faith, we often must live in this world with conditions that seemingly contradict God’s promises (see He 11:35, 36, 37, 38, 39). The “health and wealth gospel” does not square with Scripture. Sometimes God’s people face tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and even death (Ro

8:35-note; see also 2Co 6:4, 5; 11:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28). Paul described himself “as having nothing, yet possessing all things” (2Co. 6:10).

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).

(**ED 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! We have to 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!)

### **B. The life of faith focuses on eternity (He 11:10).**

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).

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.

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

### **3. 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.

### **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**

1. Is the call to discipleship (following Christ) different than the call to salvation? What difference does it make?
2. Why is saving faith necessarily obedient faith? How would you answer the charge that this confuses faith and works?
3. What are some practical implications of living as a pilgrim?
4. How can we know if specific promises in the Bible apply directly to us today?
5. [Index to Pastor Steven Cole's sermons by Bible book - Highly Recommended - They read much like a verse by verse commentary](#)

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**; (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** [Pistei parokesen \(3SAAI\) eis gen tes epaggelias os allotrian, en skenais katoikesas \(AAPMSN\) meta Isaak kai lakob ton sugkleronomon tes epaggelias tes autes:](#)

**Amplified:** [Prompted] by faith he dwelt as a temporary resident in the land which was designated in the promise [of God, though he was like a stranger] in a strange country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs with him of the same promise. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

**NLT:** And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in a tent. And so did Isaac and Jacob, to whom God gave the same promise. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** It was faith that kept him journeying like a foreigner through the land of promise, with no more home than the tents which he shared with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs with him of the promise. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** By faith he lived as a foreigner without rights of citizenship in the land of the promise as in a land not his own, having settled down to live in tents with Isaac and Jacob, joint-heirs with him of the promise, the same one

**Young's Literal:** by faith he did sojourn in the land of the promise as a strange country, in tabernacles having dwelt with Isaac and Jacob, fellow-heirs of the same promise,

**BY FAITH HE LIVED AS AN ALIEN IN THE LAND OF PROMISE: Pistei parokesen (3SAAI) eis gen tes epaggelias:**

- **By faith he lived as an alien** - Genesis 17:8; Ge 23:4; Ge 26:3; Ge 35:27; Acts 7:5,6

## ABRAHAM SOJOURNS IN THE LAND

**Sojourn** means to make a temporary stay or to reside temporarily. It is a period of time when you stay in a place as a traveler or guest. As Cole says "The life of faith is a

**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).

**KJV** has "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise."

**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**)

**Lived as an alien** (3939) (**paroikeo** from **pará** = near or at + **oikéo** = to dwell) (See study of related word **paroikos**) means to dwell near, reside as a foreigner, be a stranger, be a stranger. **Paroikeo** describes living in a place without holding citizenship be an alien, live as a stranger, dwell temporarily. In short it means to dwell at a place only for a short time. **Paroikeo** speaks of a foreigner dwelling in a state without rights of citizenship.

In the first use in the Septuagint, we read in Genesis 12:10

"Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to **sojourn** (Lxx = paroikeo) there, for the famine was severe in the land."

In Genesis 17:8 we read God's promise to Abraham

"I will give to you and to your descendants after you, **the land** (Hebrew - Eretz) of your **sojournings** (Lxx = paroikeo), all the land of Canaan, for an **everlasting possession**; and **I will be their God.**"

**Vincent** - "to dwell as a stranger, is used in later Greek of strangers who have no rights of citizenship, and no settled home."

**Robertson** - "The verb **paroikeō** means to dwell beside one, then as a stranger like paroikoi (Eph. 2:19)."

The only other NT use of **paroikeo** is by Luke who records the conversation between Cleopas and the resurrected Lord Jesus

"And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one **visiting** (paroikeo) Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" (Lk 24:18+)

**Gilbrant** on **paroikeo** - In classical Greek the primary meaning is "sojourn" or "live in close proximity." The Septuagint uses paroikeō almost exclusively to translate the Hebrew term *gûr*, although in a few passages it translates *yāshav* meaning "dwell" or "settle down" (Ge 24:37; Ex 12:40; Jdg 17:11; Ps 56:6). The basic idea of the former word throughout the Old Testament is to live among a people who were not blood relatives or of the same religious faith. This especially relates to Israel in Canaan or to the Israelites who were temporarily living outside the land; for example, Abraham (Ge 12:10) and Israel (Genesis 47:4) in Egypt. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Paroikeo** in the **Septuagint** -

Ge 12:10; Ge 17:8; Gen. 19:9; Gen. 20:1; Gen. 21:23; Gen. 21:34; Gen. 24:37; Gen. 26:3; Gen. 32:4; Gen. 35:27; Gen. 37:1; Gen. 47:4; Gen. 47:9; Exod. 6:4; Exod. 20:10; Num. 20:15; Deut. 5:14; Deut. 18:6; Deut. 26:5; Jdg. 5:17; Jdg. 17:7; Jdg. 17:8; Jdg. 17:9; Jdg. 17:11; Jdg. 19:1; Jdg. 19:16; Ruth 1:1; 2 Sam. 4:3; 2 Ki. 8:1; 2 Ki. 8:2; 1 Chr. 16:19; 1 Chr. 29:15; 2 Chr. 15:9; Ezr. 1:4; Ps. 5:4; Ps. 15:1; Ps. 31:13; Ps. 56:6; Ps. 61:4; Ps. 94:17; Ps. 105:23; Ps. 120:6; Prov. 3:29; Isa. 16:4; Isa. 52:4; Jer. 6:25; Jer. 44:14; Jer. 50:40; Lam. 4:15; Ezek. 21:12; Ezek. 47:22; Hos. 10:5;

**Wuest** on **in the land** - The preposition "**in**" is the translation of *eis* a preposition of motion. Here we have, therefore, a verb of rest used with a preposition which signifies motion. This combination speaks of the fact that Abraham went into the land and dwelt there.

**Spurgeon** - It is one thing to walk up and down among idolaters, and quite another thing to be in the same family with them. Abraham was safe enough from idolatry when he moved about among the Canaanites and saw their obscene worship. He was not safe from it in a decent, respectable household like that of his father, where the teraphim were slyly adored and the worship of false gods was carried on without the disgusting abominations that were common in Canaan. I think, also, that Abraham was sent to Canaan as a stranger to be a witness for God. These people were soon to be destroyed, but their iniquity was not yet full. They had another chance in the living of a man of God, a prophet of God, among them. You, my Christian friend, are a stranger here, and you are living here for the good of those around you. It may be that you may snatch some brand from the burning. Be content to stay if such is the case

**AS IN A FOREIGN LAND, DWELLING IN TENTS WITH ISAAC AND JACOB: os allotrian en skenais katoikesas (AAPMSN) meta Isaak kai Iakob:**

- **Dwelling in tents** - Ge 12:8 "he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his **tent**"; Ge 13:3,18; Ge 18:1,2,6,9; Ge 25:27

## DWELLING IN TENTS

**Dwight Pentecost** - 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. (Pentecost, J. D., & Durham, K. Faith that endures: A practical commentary on the book of Hebrews 182. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications)

**As in a foreign land** - In other words Abraham lived like a foreigner, which is how all believers should live their short time on earth -- as "aliens and foreigners" (1Pe 2:11-note). Are you "tethered" to this world which is passing away (1Jn 2:17-note)? If so consider Abraham's example. Remember he was able to live in the temporal the way he lived because he was looking for the eternal while in the temporal. Set your mind on the things above dear short timer" saint! (cp Col 3:1-note, Col 3:2-note).

**MacArthur - Dwelling in tents** was the way of travelers and nomads. Even in Abraham's time, tents were not considered permanent residences. Not only Abraham but also his son and grandson, **Isaac and Jacob**, lived out their lives in tents. They were in the land God had promised, but they did not settle down in it. Those great patriarchs, in fact, would *never* possess the land, except by faith. The land was in sight but not in hand. Near as it was, the land was still only a promise. Abraham did not build any houses or cities. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Hebrews)

**Spurgeon** - God had given (the land) to Abraham and to his seed by a covenant of salt, and yet he possessed not a foot of it except what he bought from the sons of Heth for a burying place. That is all he had. So today, in this world, perhaps all that some of you will ever have is about six feet of earth for a burying place; and yet it is all yours. You are living in the land of promise. “The meek shall inherit the earth.” Those who fear the Lord are the true possessors of the world; the day shall come when even this poor world itself, brought into subjection to the Christ of God, shall be ours. Indeed, it is ours already.

**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](#))

**Dwelling** (2730) (**katoikeo** from **kata** which intensifies the meaning of the verb **oikeo** = dwell, reside in, inhabit as one's abode from **oikos** = a house) means literally to settle down (be at home, dwell) in a place so to take up permanent abode or residence.

**Tents** (4633) (**skene**) is a tent, booth, hut, tabernacle, any covered or shaded place. The first use is of skene is in the transfiguration where Peter sought to build "three tabernacles here, one for (Jesus), and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." (Mt 17:4).

**Vincent** on Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - The three, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are mentioned because they cover the entire period of the sojourn in Canaan. Faith inspired these to endure patiently their unsettled life, since it assured them of a permanent home in the future.

**Spurgeon** - Here is Abraham, who lives in a tent, and has the happiness of finding his best company in his own family. I suppose that he lived with Isaac about seventy-five years. If you calculate, you will find that that is about the time. Did he live with Jacob? Yes, he must have lived at the same time as Jacob for about fifteen years. He saw his dear son Isaac married, and twin children born, and he marked their life long enough to see that Jacob was of that kind that would make a plain man dwelling in tents; and Abraham found the sweetest company with his own dear family.

### FELLOW HEIRS OF THE SAME PROMISE: ton sugkleronomon tes epaggelias tes autes

- **Fellow heirs of the same promise** - He 6:17; Ge 26:3,4; Ge 28:4,13,14; Ge 48:3,4

## HEIRS OF THE PROMISE

**Fellow heirs** - In context this refers to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**Fellow heirs** (4789) (**sugkleronomos** from **sun** = with, together, implying a closer relationship, intimacy or union + **kleronomos** = heir, sharer by lot, a possessor) is a joint heir, one who participates in the same lot. **Sugkleronomos** speaks of receiving possessions along with another OR inheriting together with. **Heirs** as used to describe one who obtains something assigned to

himself with others and the focus upon receiving an unearned gift. In the biblical sense 'heirs of God' are those who receive the blessings that God has for His people. **Kleronomos** signifies more than one who inherits, or obtains a portion, but also conveys the idea of to take into possession.

**Sugkleronomos** - 4x in NT - Ro 8:17; Eph. 3:6; Heb. 11:9; 1 Pet. 3:7

**Sugkleronomos** is used of a husband and wife who are also united in Christ and are **fellow heir of the grace of life.**" (1Pe 3:7+);

In Ephesians 3:6+ Gentiles who believe are described as **"fellow heirs"** with Jews who believe.

**Sugkleronomos** is used all believers who will share in the inheritance with Christ in His glory, as recompense for their participation in His sufferings, Paul writing "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." (Ro 8:17+)

**Same promise** (Literally "the promise the same") - The definitive article in front of promise marks this as referring to a particular promise, specifically God's promise in Ge 12:7 and Ge 13:15 where He granted Abraham the land the boundaries of which God defined in (Ge 15:18) "On that day the LORD **made a covenant** with Abram, saying, **"To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates."** This unconditional covenant God cut with Abraham was passed on to his "fellow heirs," his son **Isaac** and in turn to Isaac's son **Jacob** which explains why it is often identified as **"His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"** (Ex 2:24, cp Ex 6:8, 33:1, Dt 6:10, 9:5, 29:13, 30:20, 34:4, 2Ki 13:23)

**Related Resource:**

- [See review of the Abrahamic Covenant](#) passed to Isaac, then Jacob

**Promise** (1860)(**epaggelia/epangelia** from **epí** = intensifies verbal meaning + **aggéllo** = to tell, declare) literally means to "tell at or upon" and originally referred to an announcement or declaration (especially of a favorable message) (see Acts 23:21+). In other words the first sense of epaggelia is that of a declaration to do something which came to be associated with the implication of obligation to carry out what is stated and thus the meaning of a promise, pledge or offer. In Scripture, epaggelia refers primarily to God's pronouncements that provide assurance of what He intends to do.

**Promise in Hebrews** - Heb. 4:1; Heb. 6:12; Heb. 6:15; Heb. 6:17; Heb. 7:6; Heb. 8:6; Heb. 9:15; Heb. 10:36; Heb. 11:9; Heb. 11:13; Heb. 11:17; Heb. 11:33; Heb. 11:39;

**ILLUSTRATION** - William Carey spent thirty-five years in India and saw only a handful of converts. Yet every Christian missionary who has gone to India since that time owes a debt to Carey. He planted so that they could harvest. He translated the Word of God into Indian dialects, so that virtually all missionary effort in India has been based to some extent on his pioneer work. Most of the fruits of his labor he saw only by faith. He had faith's patience and did not "grow weary in well-doing." "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient" (James 5:7-8). (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Hebrews)

**C H Spurgeon**

ABRAHAM'S life, taken literally, is full of instruction; but we shall be wise to take the spirit of it, and endeavor to make it our own. We cannot live just as Abraham did; but we can carry out the great principles which lay at the root of Abraham's life; and, if the Holy Spirit will work in us a like degree of faith to that of the holy patriarch, we may glorify God by our lives, even as he did.

The first point in which we must follow him is that our life must be a life of faith. We cannot be children of believing Abraham unless we live by believing. If you follow your senses, you go by what you see. Now, by what this poor flesh would teach you to desire, you will know nothing of the life of Abraham. He was a man who saw what eyes can never see; he heard what ears can never hear; and he was moved, guided, actuated by motives which men of the world can never feel. He was a great man, a very prince among men; first, chief, and father of all believing men; but he owed the pre-eminence of his character to the greatness of his faith. We must have his faith, and we must live by it, as he lived by it; and then God will be able to make something of even such poor, feeble creatures as we are. Let me remind you of what we read in Heb 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If we would be like "faithful Abraham", we must begin by being believers.

Abraham is in three things a pattern to us who believe; and those three things will be the divisions of our

subject to-night. He is a pattern to us, first, in the mode of his living: "He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents." Secondly, Abraham is a pattern to believers in the company he kept: "With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." And, thirdly, Abraham is a pattern to believers in the home he looked for: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." ([Hebrews 11:9, 10 Abraham, A Pattern to Believers](#))

Hebrews 11:10 for he was **looking** for the **city which has foundations, whose architect and builder** is **God**. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** ecedecheto (3SIMI) [gar ten tous themelious echousan \(PAPFSA\) polin, es technites kai demiourgos o theos.](#)

**Amplified:** For he was [waiting expectantly and confidently] looking forward to the city which has fixed and firm foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

**NLT:** Abraham did this because he was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** for he was constantly waiting for and expecting the city having the foundations, the architect and builder of which is God.

**Young's Literal:** for he was looking for the city having the foundations, whose artificer and constructor is God.

**FOR HE WAS LOOKING FOR THE CITY WHICH HAS FOUNDATIONS WHOSE ARCHITECT AND BUILDER IS GOD:**  
exedecheto (3SIMI) gar ten tous themelious echousan (PAPFSA) polin es technites kai demiourgos o theos:

- **He was looking for the city** - Heb 12:22,28; 13:14; Jn 14:2; Php 3:20; Rev 21:2,10-27
- **Whose Architect and Builder is God** - He 3:4; Is 14:32; 2 Co 5:1

## LOOKING WITH EYES OF FAITH

Abraham's faith was demonstrated by waiting with a sense of expectancy. He **was looking** (verb ekdechomai 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<sup>+</sup>)

**For (term of explanation)** - Explains why Abraham was committed to living like a foreigner, living in a tent. As **Steven Cole** says "The life of faith focuses on eternity."

As an aside the only thing Abraham owned was a little cave in Machpelah in Hebron where he buried his wife.

**Was looking (imperfect tense) (1551)** (ekdechomai from ek = from + dechomai = receive kindly, accept deliberately and readily, put the "welcome mat" out for) (see related verb **prosdechomai**) means literally to receive or accept from some source. In regard to of future events it means to wait for them expecting them to happen. is in the picturesque progressive imperfect, his steady and patient waiting in spite of disappointment. **Ekdechomai** emphasizes Abraham's was deeply (personally) engaged, welcoming the anticipated end-conclusion, ready to warmly welcome the fulfillment of the divine promise.

**Robertson** on the use of **looking** in the [imperfect tense](#) - "picturesque progressive imperfect, his steady and patient waiting in spite of disappointment."



**Ekdechomai** in the NT - Jn. 5:3; Acts 17:16; 1 Co. 11:33; 1 Co. 16:11; Heb. 10:13; Heb. 11:10; Jas. 5:7.

James 5:7-8 uses **ekdechomai** in an exhortation to believers to be patient as they expectant 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.

**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

Like Abraham, we are looking or a home prepared for us by the Lord Himself. 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.

[Alan Carr](#) adds that...

1. **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!
2. **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!
3. **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** 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).

**Spurgeon** - Here you have the expectation of faith. Faith does not live on things seen; she lives on something yet to come. That which is to come she regards as eternal, not like a mere tent in which she dwells here, but a city that hath foundations, fixed and firm. Next we see the strength of faith, that strength seen in the deadness of nature. He was only a sojourner in the land of promise; he knew that even the promised land was only a tenting-ground for him and his descendants. He also knew that he was on his way to a divinely planned and divinely built city—not like the temporary cities of earth, which shall all perish and pass away, but a city with everlasting foundations—a city that will last as long as God Himself exists. And he was content to be a pilgrim and wanderer until he should reach that city; he was quite willing to dispense with all present comfort for the sake of that glorious future that God set before the eyes of his faith. Children of God have an eye to the world to come. They do not live “like dumb, driven cattle,” but they think of the changeless state into which death, or Christ’s coming, may speedily plunge them, and they live with an eye to that state. (See [Spurgeon's Expository Commentary](#))

**What was Abraham according to Php 3:20** (note)? Note that the mindset (eagerly await - **apekdechomai**) described in Philippians

3:20 is the same root verb (dechomai) used here for "**looking**". This describes not a passive, apathetic looking as if one were browsing through a clothing store. Instead it describes a tarrying for, an expectant waiting, the expectation generated by the anticipation of actually encountering the object being waited for, in this case **the city of God** (which equates ultimately a face to face encounter with God Himself).

How was Abraham able to live as an alien in the very land God had promised him? He did not look at the present but was expectantly waiting the promise of God that was future. Abraham could see that city by faith, and we can see it even more clearly, for John has described it for us (Rev 21,22). Like the patriarchs, we also should confess that we are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb 11:13, cp Heb 11:16), not allowing ourselves to grow deep roots here on earth.

To cultured men in the first century, the city was the highest form of civilized existence. Nothing served so well as the pattern for the ideal community.

**Spurgeon on the city which has foundations** - Abraham used to pull up the tent pins, and his men would take down the big tent pole, and roll up the canvas, and they were soon away, always moving about that country with their flocks and herds. The tents had no foundations, but Abraham was looking for a city that had **foundations**. There is nothing on earth that really has a foundation. Even those buildings that seem most firm will be dissolved, and burned up in the last general fire. All things here pass away. I cannot tell you the strange joy I felt after the earthquake at Menton, France. I had been to see many of the houses that had been shaken down, and the two churches that were greatly injured, and I was full of the earthquake. I had quite realized its terrors and its power, and when I went up the stairs of my hotel, I thought, "Well, at any moment this may all come down with a run. When I go to bed, it may all slip away." I felt a great delight in thinking that I actually realized, not in a dream, but as a matter of fact, the shakiness of this poor earthquaky world. Everything in it is without foundation, but is just a mere tent that might come down at any moment; a gust of wind might blow it over. When we are most comfortable in it, we may hear a voice saying, "Up and away: pack up your tent, and journey somewhere else." Sit loose by this world, I pray you.

**Thomas Watson** on why "**the kingdom of heaven excels other kingdoms**" - It excels in the FOUNDER and MAKER. Other kingdoms have men for their builders—but this kingdom has God for its builder! (Hebrews 11:10). Heaven is said to be 'made without hands' (2 Corinthians 5:1), to show the excellency of it. Neither man nor angel could ever lay stone in this building. God erects this kingdom. Its 'builder and maker is God'.

**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.**" THEY SAY THIS HELP 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, cf "aliens" in 1 Peter 1:1, "aliens and strangers" in 1 Peter 2:11), **who need to make it our frequent practice to gaze at the horizon of God's promises which will provide 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

**ILLUSTRATION** - In January 1915 the ship *Endurance* was trapped and crushed in the ice off the coast of Antarctica. The group of polar explorers, led by Ernest Shackleton, survived and managed to reach Elephant Island in three small lifeboats. Trapped on this empty island, far from normal shipping lanes, they had one hope. On 24 April 1916, 22 men watched as Shackleton and five others set out in a tiny lifeboat for South Georgia, an island 800 miles away. The odds seemed impossible, and if they failed, they would all certainly die. Amazingly, more than *four months* later, a boat appeared on the horizon with Shackleton on its bow shouting, "Are you all well?" And the call came back, "All safe! All well!" What held those men together and kept them alive over those months? Faith and hope placed in the promise of one man. They believed that Shackleton would find a way to save them. As we look at our own problems, we don't need to give up. We can have hope in the certainty and promises of One Man—Jesus, our God and Saviour.

**Brian Bell** ([sermon](#)) - There are many parallels with Abraham's experience and that of Christians. So let's do a personal inventory:

- Do we feel at home here?

- Or do we feel like missionaries, like expatriates (those who live 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)

### John MacArthur devotional on Hebrews 11....

**Focusing on Heaven is the best way to endure difficulties on earth.**- Following God's call isn't always easy. He expects us to trust Him explicitly, and yet He doesn't ask our advice on decisions that may impact us dramatically. He doesn't tell us His specific plans at any given point in our lives. He doesn't always shelter us from adversity. He tests our faith to produce endurance and spiritual maturity—tests that are sometimes painful. He makes some promises that we'll never see fulfilled in this life.

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 nation, a land, and a blessing (Gen. 12:1–3). That was good 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.** Yet Abraham patiently waited for God's promises to be fulfilled.

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, whether or not he ever saw his earthly home in his lifetime.**

**Similarly, being heavenly minded gives you the patience to continue working for the Lord when things get tough. It's the best cure I know for discouragement or spiritual fatigue.** That's why 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 can endure whatever happens here. (Drawing Near)

**Jack Arnold - Christian, what motivates you?** Have you fallen into Satan's trap so as to believe that money, power, and prestige can fulfill your innermost desires. Are you genuinely motivated by spiritual realities, namely your great desire to be a part of the New Jerusalem, the Heavenly City? Are you, as Abraham, a pilgrim and a stranger on this earth? God has promised you an eternal inheritance in the New Jerusalem. This is your possession but you do not actually possess it yet, but one day you will. Therefore, you must operate by faith, as did Abraham and patiently endure through life as a sojourner in the world until you enter the New Jerusalem, your Heavenly City.

**But what about you, non-Christian?** If you were to die tonight where would you go - to heaven or to hell? The eternal city is for all who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and for no one else. Have you heard the call of God to salvation? Are you convicted by God about your sins, and do you feel a struggle in your soul - something telling you to yield and receive Christ and something telling you to resist and run from Christ? God is calling. Do not reject this call, but obey God and by faith trust Christ and then you will know that God has sovereignly called you to salvation. Just as God called Abraham thousands of years ago, He may be calling you now. Do not put off this decision, for your eternal destiny hangs on what you do with Christ in this life.

**Robert Morgan** - 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. "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) 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. ([Hebrews 11 - The Faith Chapter](#))

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[David Holwick - Abraham and movable tents.](#)

- a) He didn't get the full picture in this life.
  - 1> His possessions never came up to God's promise.
  - 2> His descendants numbered one, not like stars.
- b) But he kept the faith and went where God said.
  - 1> I think we won't have all our questions answered.
  - 2> Meaning of suffering, etc.
  - 3> We can know enough to walk in the right direction.

Long ago, God made his home among us.

- A. Like Abraham, he "tabernacled." John 1:14
  - 1) A temporary, unsettled condition.
  - 2) Jesus wasn't that impressive.
    - a) Baby - "No room in the inn."
    - b) Adult - "No place to lay his head"
  - 3) His own family didn't know what to do with him. Mark 3:21

B. His accommodations were temporary, but his salvation is eternal.

- 1) He invites us to be part of his heavenly family.
- 2) His family is those who hear God's word and put it into practice.
- 3) He offers peace and acceptance to each of us.

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**Occupied with Heaven** - We've all heard of people who are **so heavenly-minded that they are no earthly good**. We've also heard about preachers who promise their flock great reward in heaven, but ignore life's difficulties. Some people accuse them of being "pie-in-the-sky prophets" who have forgotten that we must still live in the world. But according to the writer of Hebrews, there is a proper heavenly-mindedness. It's the virtue that enabled Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to live by faith as tent-dwelling nomads in Canaan (Heb 11:8, 9, 10).

In his book *Mere Christianity*, **C. S. Lewis** wrote, "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.'" (ED: See related discussion of

If our minds are properly occupied with heaven, we can't help but do earthly good. — Herbert Vander Lugt [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Go up to the mountain of blessing  
Alone with the Master in prayer;  
Then down to the work in the valley below,  
Your face with the love-light of Jesus aglow.

--Anon.

**As you mind your earthly duties, keep heaven in mind.**

## **HEAVEN** **by Edward Griffin**

"For he looked for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God." Hebrews 11:10

This was the habit by which the patriarch Abraham sustained himself under the ills of life, while wandering a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth. It was reasonable in him so to do. When men are about to remove into another country, they are eager to catch the reports of those who have visited it, and if possible they visit beforehand to explore it. We hope by and by to go away to dwell in the heavens for the rest of our existence, and it is interesting to collect all the information we can respecting that country. It is interesting to see where our Christian friends have gone who have disappeared from our sight. If the Bible is not a fable and all the hopes of man not a dream, they are yet alive, in another and a better state. Why should unbelief put them out of existence? Cannot God uphold them in a state of pure spirits like his own? Could his benevolence be gratified by placing them here to groan and weep for a few days and then to be no more? If their present existence differs from our experience what then? Have we seen all the varieties of things even in this little world? To a mind that in thought has visited India and China and the islands of the southern sea, is it incredible that a state of things should exist widely different from our experience? And if our beloved friends are still alive and in that blessed state, how interesting to visit them there and see the home they have found.

There is no need that the inhabitants of earth should remain so little acquainted with heaven. There is a ladder, such as Jacob saw, by which they may ascend and descend every hour. We ought daily in our thoughts to visit that delightful land and to make excursions through its glorious regions. The more we accustom ourselves to these flights the easier they will become. Why is it that we feel so little the impression of eternal glory, but because our thoughts are no more conversant with heaven? It is of the first importance that we should become more familiar with that blessed country. It would tend to wean us from this poor world, to support us under the trials of life and the delay of our hopes, to illumine us with the light of that land of vision, to transform us into the likeness of its blessed inhabitants, and to reconcile us to the self-denials and labors which we have here to endure for Christ. It would tend to settle the great question of our qualifications for heaven. If we could gain distinct ideas of that blessed world, we might easily decide this point by ascertaining whether we could relish its sacred enjoyments, and whether this is the heaven we desire.

One reason that heaven makes so little impression upon us is that we contemplate it in generals, and of course confusedly. We must take it in detail. We must go through its golden streets, and traverse its flowery fields, and examine its objects one by one. Let us spend a few moments in attempting this, and for a season imagine ourselves there.

The reflection of least importance respecting that world is that it is a PLEASANT country. In whatever part of the universe it is situated, there is a local heaven, where the body of Jesus is, where the bodies of Enoch, and Elijah, and those who arose with Christ are, and where the bodies of all the saints will be after the resurrection. Those bodies will be material, and of course will occupy space, and must have a local residence, as real as the bodies which are now on the earth. That country is already prepared, (it was "prepared from the foundation of the world,") and is unquestionably material. The idea that the saints will have no place to dwell in but the air has no support in the word of God. Their city, in more senses than one, "has foundations." It is a real country; and my first remark is that it is a pleasant country. He that could make the scenes which we behold, can unite the most beautiful of them into one and surpass them all. And there can be no doubt the place which he has chosen for the metropolis of his empire, and which Christ selected from all worlds for his residence and the residence of his Church must be the most beautiful of all the worlds that he has made. It is set forth in Scripture under images drawn from the most enchanting objects of sense. I know that these are intended to illustrate its spiritual glory, but can you prove that this is all? Why are spiritual things set forth by sensible objects? You say, because men are in the body. And pray, will they not eternally be in the body after the resurrection? And will not an exhibition to the senses of the riches of the divine nature be as useful an auxiliary to other revelations than as now? Nor can we doubt that disembodied spirits are capable of beholding and enjoying the material works of God. Otherwise the material universe would be a blank to the angels, and to human spirits before the resurrection.

We may then reasonably conclude that heaven is a world of more resplendent and varied beauty than mortal eye has ever seen.

The next circumstance to be mentioned respecting that world is that it contains THE MOST DELIGHTFUL SOCIETY. The saints are forever delivered from the interruptions of the wicked, from the pollution of their society and the disgusting coarseness of their conversation; and are admitted to the most intimate friendship with the holy angels, and with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and the whole assembly that have been collecting since the death of Abel, including, in many instances, the most beloved friends they knew on earth. Parents will there meet their children, and husbands their wives, after a long and painful separation. Brothers

and sisters will rush into each other's arms and exclaim, "Have I found you at last? This is far unlike the parting hour when I closed your eyes, and far unlike the solitary evenings in which I have visited your grave and wept over your dust." Those blessed spirits will enjoy the most perfect friendship, with every distrust and rival interest banished; each loving the other as his own soul, and not a thought nor a joy but what is common. Their conversation will be high and satisfying, turning on the history of God's love and the wonders of his works; and the expressions of love to each other in their looks, deportment, and words, will be most tender and convincing.

The EMPLOYMENT of heaven is delightful. The saints are delivered from all the cares and toils of this life, and have nothing to do but to serve and praise God, to go on his errands to different worlds, to study into the mysteries of his nature and the wonders of his works, and to converse with their brethren on these high and exhaustless themes. Every faculty has attained its full employment—the understanding in grasping the great truths of God and declaring the glories of his nature; the memory in going over his past dispensations and collecting materials for an everlasting monument of praise; the heart in loving and thanking him; the will in choosing him and his service; the eyes in beholding his glory; the hands and feet in doing his will; the tongue in high conversation and bursting songs.

In that world they have ATTAINED TO THE PERFECTION OF ALL THEIR POWERS; not to that perfection which excludes progress, but to that which fits them for the highest action and enjoyment that their capacities admit. They are delivered from every hindrance to meditation, devotion, or service, arising from a weak or disordered body; from all the passions and prejudices which warped their judgement here; from all those indiscretions by which they feared they should injure the sacred cause they loved; and have attained to unerring wisdom. Their memories are strengthened to recall the leading actions of their lives and the principal dealings of God with them. They are freed from all languor and wanderings in duty, and can hold their attention perpetually fixed without weariness or satiety.

They have attained to the perfection of KNOWLEDGE; not that perfection, I say again, which excludes progress, but that which prevents error. They have advanced greatly in the positive knowledge of all those things which a sanctified spirit desires to know. The feeblest infant that has gone to heaven probably knows more of God than all the divines on earth. They see as they are seen and they know as they are known. Besides the light directly shed upon them, in the excursions which they make through the universe they have a glorious opportunity to study God in his works and dispensations.

They have ESCAPED FROM ALL THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PRESENT LIFE; from sickness and pain and the mortification of being laid aside as useless; from poverty and the fear of poverty; and have attained to the perfect gratification of every taste and desire—to the possession of all things. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." As heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, they own the sun, moon, and stars; they possess the eternal God.

They have escaped from all the DEGRADATION AND SCORN and slander which their poverty or their religion drew upon them here, and have reached the highest honors of the sons of God. They have been crowned and have sat down with Christ on his throne, and with their golden harps and robes of light forever sing and forever shine.

They have escaped from all the "VANITY" that was found in the creature, which left them unsatisfied, uneasy, and vexatiously disappointed; the vanity too which consisted in the transient nature of earthly things, and disturbed the short-lived enjoyment with the reflection that it would soon expire. From all this "vanity and vexation of spirit" they have escaped, and have found a good which fully satisfies and brings no sorrow with it, and no apprehension that it will ever end.

They are perfectly delivered from SIN, that body of death under which they groaned all their lives long. O how they used to look forward and pant after this deliverance. But now they have found it. Not a worry that will ever offend their God again. And they have attained to perfect positive holiness. They love and thank and delight in God as much as they desire. They could not wish, with their present powers, to be more tender or grateful towards him. They could not wish to be more free from selfishness or anger or envy, nor, with their present powers, to be more benevolent or affectionate towards every creature of God.

They are forever delivered from the buffetings of SATAN. The enemy that annoyed them so long is shut up in prison and can never approach them again. No longer can those temptations vex those who made them weary of life and pursued them into the grave.

Every wall of separation between them and God is taken down, every cloud which hid his face is dispersed, every frown smoothed into smiles.— They are admitted to the perfect vision and sweet enjoyment of God and the Lamb. They see that God does not reproach them for the past, that he has not one less tender feeling towards them for all their sins, and that he loves them with an affection infinitely surpassing that of the tenderest earthly parent.— They are conscious of an interchange of thoughts and feelings with him most affectionate,—of a communion no less real than that which subsists between earthly friends. They possess greatly enlarged views of his perfections, particularly of his unbounded love, and enjoy him to a degree of which we have here no

conception. Their souls swell and expand with the mighty blessedness, and rise into raptures of wonder, love, and praise.

The principal medium through which they see and commune with God is the Mediator. It is from his face that the strongest emanations of Godhead shine. He is the sun which illumines the heavenly city. "The city," as John saw it, "had no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb" was "the light thereof." It is through him chiefly that God speaks to the inhabitants of heaven, and through him as the representative of the Father they send up their thanks. They put them into his hands as the Deity expressed, much in the same way as they did in the days of his flesh. The incarnate God is constantly displayed in heaven on a resplendent throne, with much the same personal appearance, perhaps, that he had on Tabor and in Patmos. Though arrayed in glory that would overpower mortal vision, it is Jesus of Nazareth still—the same body, the same features, the same scars in his hands and feet and side. O how do they feel as they behold him. When they look back to Calvary, and then down to hell, and then abroad over the heavenly plains, and down the slope of ages, and see from what he delivered them, and to what he raised them, and at what expense, with what unutterable gratitude do they cast their crowns at his feet, and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." And then they take their harps and fill all the arches of heaven with the song, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

All this glory and happiness will be ETERNAL. On earth their enjoyment was damped by the thought that it would soon expire. Their dearest friends, their health, their life, were held by a very uncertain tenure. But now they have no fear of change. When they first opened their eyes in that world and found themselves entered on a blessedness which was sure and eternal, with what transport did they contemplate that single fact after all their doubts and fears. The thought that they are forever safe, that no changes can cast them down, has in it a weight and sublimity of blessedness which no imagination can conceive. They have leisure to ponder over these glorious thoughts. They may look forward to twenty, thirty, or forty years without thinking that age is coming on to cramp their powers and terminate their enjoyments. They may breathe the airs of paradise and inhale the delights of heaven for a thousand years, without losing the freshness of their youth or approaching any nearer to an end. They may measure over a million of ages of varied delights, and have as much before them as at the first. They may pass as many more millions of ages as there were dusts in the earth, and still they are as young as ever. From that distant period of eternity, when they look back to the few moments that they sojourned on earth, how diminutive will this little space appear; how trifling its joys and sorrows; and how amazing will it seem that they could be so interested in them.

They will ETERNALLY GROW IN CAPACITY, KNOWLEDGE, HOLINESS, AND HAPPINESS. This seems to be the natural progress of mind until it is checked by bodily decay. But when no such restraint hangs upon the spirit, it will hold on in its course of advancement without end. As it grew in the vigor of its faculties from infancy to manhood, so it will expand in the regions of life to eternity: insomuch that the least soul will far outstrip the present dimensions of Gabriel; and holding on its way, will be to what the highest angel now is, as a giant to an infant; and still it has an endless progression before it—rising higher and higher in intellectual sublimity, and forever approximating towards the infinite dimensions of God.

Its knowledge too will forever increase. Perpetually pondering on the wonders of God, studying him in his works, drawing lessons from all worlds among which it makes excursions, and diving deeper and deeper into the unfathomable wonders of redemption, it cannot fail to advance in knowledge without end. The time then must come when the least soul in heaven will know more than all the creation of God now do; and still it has just entered the heavenly school. Imagination cannot keep pace with its flight through the sublime heights of intellectual ascension. What amazing views of God and the Lamb, what amazing views of the mysteries of redemption, what amazing views of the wonders of creation, of the purposes to be answered by the sufferings of the damned, of the boundless reach of mercy, of the whole history of God's administration in all worlds: and still to pursue the high and glorious study without end.

And in proportion to its advance in capacity and knowledge must be its holiness. The more God is seen the more he will be loved and delighted in.—What new and unspeakable fervors of affection will be enkindled by those accessions of knowledge which will be hourly coming in. What a flame of love and gratitude will be acquired in the eternal progress of capacity and knowledge. The time will come when the least soul in heaven will contain more love and gratitude than the whole consistory of angels now do: and still to advance to higher and still higher fervors without end.

And in proportion to its advance in capacity, knowledge, and holiness, will be its happiness. If to know and love God in one degree makes a heaven, to know and love him in ten degrees will make a tenfold happiness. What unimagined bliss then must the holy soul find in rising up to views and fervors increasing as the ages of eternity go round. The time must come when the feeblest saint in heaven will enjoy more in one hour than all the creation of God have enjoyed to this day; and still he has just begun his eternal progress in blessedness. From those sublime heights of ecstasy he will ascend to heights still more sublime, reaching upwards continually and approximating forever towards the infinite happiness of the Eternal Mind.

And now behold that creature!—the feeblest that ever entered heaven; behold him at some imagined point in eternity, with all this

increase of capacity, knowledge, holiness, and happiness; and how awfully great and glorious does he appear. As much above the heathen gods as the sun exceeds a glow worm. Could that creature appear on earth he would be worshiped by half the nations. He would pour upon their sight a sublimity and glory a million times greater than they ever ascribed to God himself. And still that creature has just begun his eternal progress. What then will he become? The imagination of Gabriel falters and turns back from the amazing pursuit.

Child of God, bow before your own majesty. Debase not yourself by sordid actions. Do not forget the glories of your nature, nor sell your infinite birthright for such a contemptible mess of pottage as earth can yield. Child of God, cheer up under the trials of life. Let nothing cast you down who are standing on the verge of immortal glory. It is the only opportunity you will ever have to suffer for Christ. Eternity will be long enough for enjoyment. Your toils and self-denials will all be recompensed a thousand fold by that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Child of God, why are you cast down? I wonder you are not constantly transported. Our Savior said to his disciples, "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice rather because your names are written in heaven." So say I to you. Rejoice not that your wealth is increased, that your honors flow in upon every gale, that the laurels of science encircle your brow, that you have the sweetest and most affectionate friends; but rejoice rather that an immortality of glory is before you. Child of God, why are you sluggish and sleeping out life in ungrateful inaction? What is the world to you who are so soon to be transported to the heaven of heavens? How will the world appear to you when it is melting down in the general conflagration? How will the world appear to you a million ages after the judgment, while you are lost among the glories of heaven? And why this ungrateful sloth? Have you nothing to do for him who irrevocably conferred this immortality upon you? Have you nothing to do for him who redeemed you from hell by his own blood, and has gone to prepare a place for you? Have you nothing to do for him on earth at whose feet you will presently lie in such unutterable transports of wonder and gratitude? Have you nothing to do for him on the very ground which was stained by his blood, and while breathing the air that was agitated by his sighs? Have you forgotten that he left on earth a beloved Church, and that he has said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me?" Have you nothing to do for that Church on which his heart is so tenderly fixed? Have you nothing to do for his honor among men, who came out to seek you when you were wandering from the fold of God, - who separated you from your former companions and put a title to heaven in your hands? Ah Sirs, how will this listlessness appear when you are enveloped in the glories of heaven and are filling the celestial arches with your bursting praise?

Up, every redeemed soul, and do what you can for your God and Savior. Take your harps from the willows and begin the raptured song. Let all the country around be charmed and won by your sacred melody. Go on your way enchanting the ear of a Christless age with your harp and your song; and when you come to the last enemy, enchant the ear of death itself with the same celestial notes; and let your praises die away from mortal ears, only to burst in new and louder tones on the ear of heaven. Amen and Amen.

## THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

### G CAMPBELL MORGAN

- Hebrews 11:9-19 "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed" -
- Hebrews 11:8 "By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise" Heb. xi. 9 "By faith, Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac"
- Hebrews 11:17 the greatness of Abraham there can be no question.

He is claimed by Mohammedanism, by Judaism, and by Christianity; and is held in profound reverence in each case. Someone has taken the trouble to go through the Koran, and has found that Abraham is mentioned therein no less than 188 times. He stands out in human history as one of the greatest personalities. It was of Abraham that James said, "he was called the friend of God." In the Old Testament there are two occasions upon which he is so described: once by Jehoshaphat, when in an hour of danger he was praying out of a full heart, and out of the sense of a deep necessity, he spoke of Abraham, the founder of the race, and said: "Abraham, Thy friend for ever." The other occasion is found in the prophecy of Isaiah; when the prophet was declaring the message of God, and repeating the words of Jehovah, he said, "Abraham, my friend." Of no other man is it ever recorded in that way. Or Moses it is said that he talked with God as a friend; but here this is said of this one man, "the friend of God." I would not be misunderstood, for God has had His friends in all ages; but this is the one outstanding occasion when the declaration is made, and cited in the New Testament, thus corroborating the statement of the Old, that Abraham was a friend of God. In this classic passage on faith, the writer has more to record about him than of any other. Beginning at verse eight, the story continues, with some parenthetical interpretations to verse nineteen. This, of course, is a condensed story, and any consideration of the faith of Abraham must necessarily be a condensed consideration. In the story there are three great movements referred to, and they are indicated in the texts. They reveal a widening experience, or rather, a deepening experience in the life of Abraham. First, faith 53 54 THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH obeying : "By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed." Faith, onlooking, sojourning in the land of promise, "by faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise." Faith offering: "By faith, Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac."



We may thus gather the whole story and consider the revelation of the force of faith in the life of this man Abraham. Faith obeying. What is the background of the story? It is not here with any fulness. Even in the Old Testament record the references are slight, although very definite. It has been emphatically stated that this man Abraham never lived; that he was an eponymous hero, that he was an imaginary figure. By the same people it has been said that Moses could not possibly have written the Pentateuch, because writing was not known in his time. That is all past now, and the world has grown through that stage, for to-day we know that Abraham is a figure in the actual history, springing from Ur of the Chaldees. Archaeological excavation has revealed to us Ur of the Chaldees, and has shown a remarkable condition of high material and mental civilization existing there in Ur. Small facts illustrate. Some time ago, in the midst of the ' excavations, they dug up the remains of a house in which was a clay tablet which had been left unfinished, and on that tablet, whoever had been using it, was the working out of a problem in trigonometry, which problem they are still working out at Oxford and Cambridge. So it was not a barbaric condition on which Abraham turned his back when he left Ur of the Chaldees, but a high form of civilization on the material and mental levels; without any evidence of anything in the nature of high spiritual or moral standards. That is Abraham's background, and it was there he heard the call. "Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xii. 1-3). That was the call Abraham heard, a call to leave kith and kin and country, and all the conditions there, that ultimately by going from those conditions he might be a blessing to all the world. Now obedi THE TRIUMPHS OP FAIT H 55 know, and I am not caring to know, or to find out. What I do know is that Abraham was convinced that the call had come to him to turn his back upon Ur, and that it was God's call. Of that he was perfectly sure. What processes of mind and thought in Abraham may have preceded this we can only infer. We can infer that he had come to an hour of disillusionment, of bitter dissatisfaction with l.& as it was being lived; and the order of life which is contrary to the high, and the noble and true. Somehow he had come to a consciousness of God, had come to know God; and there, in the midst of the conditions that obtained in Ur, he had known that it was God speaking to him. That one thing is certain, that a man knew God had spoken. When we see that, the wonder of his action fades away. It is the kind of action one would expect; yet it was only possible to faith. In that twelfth chapter of Genesis, the next sentence we read is: "So Abram went out, as Jehovah had spoken unto him." In the Hebrews' reference, the writer says not only that he went out, but he did not know where he was going; but he is equally careful to say that though he did not know where he was going, he knew what he was going for, and why he was going. "He looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Architect and Framer is God." But Ur had foundations 2 No, Ur had nothing but that which was material; and so evanescent was it that it was buried for long centuries in an accumulation of dust and rubbish. He sought a city that had foundations, whose order of life, Whose Architect and Builder was God Himself; and he went because God told him to go, and by faith he obeyed. So we see faith obeying, a man going out to become a pilgrim and a stranger; going out to undertake a march without a map, on a progress without a programme, but going with God. That is the first element of faith in the man, and wonderful in itself. Application is hardly necessary. Can we get the vision this gives us, a man hearing God, hearing God's command to do a thing that seemed absurd? Yet that thought did not daunt him. He set up his standard of Me, shook the dust of Ur from his feet, and went out on the march. Where? Never mind where, but go. No wonder he has been called the father of the faithful! That was a marvellous act of obedience. We are apt to read the second text, and fail to notice that there is another element here. By faith he was able to obey, and by faith "he became a sojourner in the land of promise." Not a landowner, but dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob. We shall return to 56 THE TRIUMPHS OP FAIT H that reference to Isaac and Jacob later. Let us see Abraham, without a city, now become a sojourner. The idea of the word sojourner is arresting and suggestive. It is that of being a lodger, and not one owning the place. The word sojourner is a beautiful word, which we do not want to lose; but it means he was simply a lodger; a sojourner not in active possession. How long did that last? By faith he became a sojourner, and he remained a sojourner. How long? Just about one hundred years. He was heir of the promise. His title was the word of God to him; but when he died, after being a lodger for a hundred years, how much did he possess of the land? Machpelah, the buryingplace of Sarah. That was all, but he had faith, and he was content to wait. By faith he was a sojourner, and when the end came to his life on the earthly plane, all that he owned in that land was a cave in a field. That was all. Read that story, and see that he declined to take it as a gift from aliens. He bought it, and insisted upon paying for it; and the transaction was legally done, and he became the owner of a burying-ground. That is all that Abraham himself ever owned in the country; but by faith he was a sojourner. I thank God that all these stories tell us the truth about these men, of failure as well as success. His was wonderful faith, but there were some sad deflections from faith in the early part. Abraham went down into Egypt, and we know of his trouble there, and the d&culty created. If the pagan Egyptian king had not had some sense of honour, there would have been a terrible catastrophe. He could not trust God wholly with his future. Yet follow the story through, and in those hundred years he obeyed, waiting, trusting. By faith he became a sojourner. He had turned his back upon a great city, a great civilization. He had gone out seeking a city whose Builder and Maker is God. He was seeking a country, a heavenly, when he was pitching his tent, and dwelling, a sojourner, under the oaks of Mamre. Cities there were full of material property and wealth; but Abraham was not lured by them. Lot was, and that was where Lot broke down. He was a good man, but he allowed himself to be seduced by the promise of a way by which wealth might be quickly accumulated. But Abraham sat under the oaks, unaffected by the lure of the cities. He accepted the unsettled life. He was a stranger and a pilgrim in the midst of things so contrary to vision that had come to him, and to the call he had heard. He was a pilgrim, travelling all the while. He

"Nightly pitched his moving tent, A day's march nearer home," THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH 57 the city of his heart, the passion of his life. Faith manifested itself in the fact that he was a sojourner for a hundred years. Whatever the difficulties, he never went back to Ur. So finally we come to that which is the climax and central fact. "By faith, Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac." That does not necessarily refer to sacrifice by death. The word "offered" simply means he presented him, he yielded him to God. When God asked him to offer his son, he consented by faith, apparently sacrificing all his hopes. That is what this means. Apparently. That is how it looked. But Abraham did not measure things by the apparent way. He had waited long for Isaac, for a son; and the son had been given supernaturally. Isaac was born out of due season. He had seen this son grow up, at any rate at this time some thirty or forty years old; and he had to consent to the action of his father, which undoubtedly he did. When God said to Abraham, Give Me thy son, he yielded Isaac to Him in the only way he saw, and that, was by putting him to death. So Abraham journeyed with him-and what a journey it was ! When they neared the place of sacrifice, Abraham said to the men: "Abide ye here . . . and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you." He was going to offer Isaac, to the uttermost limit, even to death. Yet there was a confident assertion that that was not going to be the end. He was coming back and the lad was coming back ' with him. The father of the faithful! What is the meaning of this? "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac," though in him were vested all his hopes. He followed what seemed to him the only course, the only way in which he could present that lad to God, in answer to the Divine call. But he was "accounting," reckoning, reasoning that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead. That is what he meant when he said: "I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you." He was willing to go to all lengths, and to slay him; and when the hour came he made the offering, reckoning that if he put Isaac to death, God would raise him up from the dead. The writer says: "From whence he did also in a parable receive him back." That is the central, most precious thing he did: yielding, accounting. Faith is not blind unbelief. Faith is not superstition. Faith works by reason. It does the thing that seems contrary to Expectation, but it does it, reckoning on God by faith, being sure of God; being sure that after Abraham had done his utmost, and his son was blotted out of his heaven, God was able to raise Isaac up. By 58 THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH faith Abraham offered up his son. That was the supreme activity. Faith is conviction of God, and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. This is wrought out all through the story of Abraham. As we watch faith in him we see it honoured by God, in spite of faltering, and in spite of failure. We see God overruling the failure in man, and bringing everything to consummation. We do not wonder that Abraham is called the father of the faithful. The phrase is not found in Scripture but the teaching of the New Testament warrants it. In the days of His flesh His enemies said to Jesus, in answer to His word that "the truth shall make you free," "We be Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man; how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?" Our Lord said this startling thing: "I know that ye are Abraham's seed," but you are not his children. Mark that carefully. Only those who live by faith are the children of Abraham. Paul said of Abraham, "who is the father of us all." He was writing to Christian people. So everyone to-day who believes, who lives by faith, and obeys when the call comes, waits, is content to make the offering God demands at whatever cost: such are the children of Abraham. Such are the souls who by their faith in God, become God's instruments through whom He hastens the day of faith's final victory.