

# *“God’s Faith-Family of Witnesses”*

Hebrews 11:8-22

February 3, 2019

## **INTRO:**

- Do me a favor... **Tell me about your family...**
- Today... **focus on faith & family in a fallen world**
- Biblically covering Genesis chapters 12-50!
- Biblically covering from here to heaven or hell!

## **CONTEXT:**

- Recent weeks... Hebrews 11:1-9
  - **Defining biblical F.A.I.T.H.**
  - Word, Witness, Worldview, Worship, Walk, Without, Work, WITNESS...
- Prior... Hebrews 10
  - vv.26-29 = **Faith is a divine divider...**
  - vv.24-25 = Urge one another on...
- Warning #4... “Don’t Disobey”
- Hebrews IS exhortation... with **5 WARNINGS**
- Hebrews glorifies Christ & champion His Gospel

**T/S:** Let’s transition full circle back to today: Heb. 11:8-22

## **BIG IDEA:**

*God’s faith-family  
is God’s grace-family  
of the weak & the willed who witness!*

## PREVIEW: F. A. M. I. L. Y.

- Family of Faithful Followers
- Acted-upon, All-in-Ambassadors
- Messiah's Miraculous Missionaries
- Informed & Inspected Inspirers
- Living & Loving Legacies
- YOU & Your-Yearnings?

## **F** Family of Faithful-Followers

*<sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.*

### VIDEO: "Hold On 41a"

- F is for One **FAITH**, One **FAMILY**, & One **FOCUS**
- F is for **FAITHFULLY-Obeying FOLLOWERS...**
- F is for **FOREVER-FORGIVEN & FOCUSED & FREE**

## **A** Acted-upon, All-in Ambassadors

*<sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect/designer and builder is God.*

- **Acted-upon, Adopted & Assured** by God & Grace
- **Accept & Apply** the Almighty's Architecture!
- **All-in Ambassadors... Aroma & Army of God!**

**John 1:12-13**

*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

**Romans 12:5**

*So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

**1 John 3:1**

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*

**Ephesians 1:5**

*He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will*

**VIDEO:**      *"Koinonia and Church"*

# **M Messiah's Miraculous Missionaries**

*<sup>11</sup> By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him*

*faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.*

**VIDEO:** “Faces of Amazing Grace”

*God’s faith-family is 1<sup>st</sup> & foremost His Mercy & Grace-family!*

**1 Peter 2:11** tells us that *the flesh is warring against the soul...*

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| ➤ Abraham               | idolatrous pagan...       |
| ➤ Sarah                 | laughed at God...         |
| ➤ Isaac                 | coward...                 |
| ➤ Jacob                 | “the scoundrel” ...       |
| ➤ Jacob’s son’s         | sold Joseph as a slave    |
| ➤ “Children of Abraham” | “physical” vs. spiritual  |
| ➤ Church of today...    | “visible” vs. “invisible” |

**Romans 7:24** *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from this body of death?*

*“Only the TRULY WRETCHED... TRULY worship.” – JDP*

*If you find that the devil is leaving you alone... It is because you are already his.... And if you feel no pain from all this... It is because dead men feel no pain... **You have been warned!***

***You have been warned!”** - Charles Spurgeon*

# **I** **Informed & Inspected** **Inspirers**

*<sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*

**VIDEO:** “Hold On 41b” (Abe explains Acts & Acts explains Abe!)

**Not everyone who claims/appears to be in the faith-family is in!**

- Hagar... Ishmael... Esau... anti-Jesus-Jews...
- Judas... Demas... Rich Young Ruler... Goats/Wolves

*<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, <sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” <sup>19</sup> He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

*The proof of Abraham's faith was his willingness to give back to God... to sacrifice everything he had...*

**(We are a family of cross-carriers!)**

*The truth is that every advance that we make for God and for His cause must be made at our inconvenience. If it does not inconvenience us at all, there is no cross in it! If we have been able to reduce spirituality to a smooth, easy pattern that costs us nothing—then... We have stopped and pitched our unworthy tent halfway between the hell's swamp and heaven's peak. - A.W. Tozer*

## **L Living & Loving Legacies**

*<sup>20</sup> By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. <sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. <sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.*

*To fail to exclude unbelievers from the fellowship of the church is a grave error. Only disunity and dissension can result when those who serve Christ try to work in harmony with those who serve Satan.... Additionally, to design the activities of the church to appeal to unbelievers... is to give them a false sense of security. The result for them may be eternal tragedy - Dever*

**VIDEO:** "Charles Faust Christian Legacy"

# **Y** **YOU... & Your Yearnings?**

**CLOSE:** God's faith-family is filled with fallen-followers...

By grace thru faith God's faith-family has been transformed!

<b>F</b>	=	<b>Fallen...</b>	to Faithfully-obedient Followers
<b>A</b>	=	<b>Awful...</b>	to All-in, Awesome-overcomers
<b>M</b>	=	<b>Messed-up...</b>	to Miraculous Missionaries
<b>I</b>	=	<b>Infected...</b>	to Infused Inspirers
<b>L</b>	=	<b>Lost...</b>	to Lover, Learner, Leader, Lifer
<b>Y</b>	=	<b>YOU...?</b>	Are you a Yikes! or Yahoo! ???

**God's faith-family is God's grace-family  
of the **weak** & the **willed** who **witness!****

**Romans 15:5-6** (ESV)

*<sup>5</sup> May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Let's Pray!**

**VIDEO:** "Zach Williams - "No Longer Slaves"

## Research & Prep Notes:

### **Abraham: The Life of Faith ([Hebrews 11:8-19](#))**

*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. 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; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

*By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised; therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

*All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to*



*return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type. ([11:8-19](#))*

**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 life of faith has some specific ingredients, which are pointed out in this text as reflected in the life of Abraham. Abraham is a composite of God's pattern of faith. He reveals the totality of the true faith life, all the ingredients that constitute it.

*Abraham was the father of the Jewish people, and he is therefore presented to the Jews to whom the*

*book of Hebrews was written as the most strategic example of faith.*

*They needed to realize that Abraham was more than the father of their race; he also was, by example, the father of the faithful, the father of everyone who lives by faith in God.*

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.**

When Stephen was preaching to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, he began by showing how Abraham had obediently trusted God by leaving his homeland and believing God's promises of blessing ([Acts 7:2-5](#)).

In his powerful argument in Romans for justification by faith, Paul uses Abraham as

the central illustration ([Rom. 4](#)). Abraham is the classic example of the life of faith.

**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.

*In this passage are five features of faith that show us the complete pattern: the pilgrimage of faith, the patience of faith, the power of faith, the positiveness of faith, and the proof of faith.*

### **The Pilgrimage of Faith**

*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. ([11:8](#))*

*It was not Abraham's plan to leave Ur and then Haran, and eventually settle in the land of Canaan. In fact, when he left Ur he had no idea where he was going. He was called by God, and only God knew what was in store for him.*

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.*

It may have taken several days, or even weeks or months, to make final preparation for the trip, but in his mind he was already on the way. From then on, everything he did revolved around obeying God's call.

Abraham was a sinful heathen who grew up in an unbelieving and idolatrous society. We do not know exactly how or when God first made Himself known to Abraham, but he was raised in a home that was pagan ([Josh. 24:2](#)).

**His native city of Ur was in Chaldea, in the general region called Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. It was a fertile land and was culturally advanced. It was near where the Garden of Eden was located (cf. [Gen. 2:14](#)) and was some 140 miles from where the great city of Babylon would one day be built.**

Isaiah refers to Abraham as "the rock from which you were hewn" and "the quarry from which you were dug" ([Isa. 51:1-2](#)), reminding his fellow Jews that God sovereignly condescended to call Abraham out of paganism and idolatry in order to bless him and the world through him. He may have had higher moral standards than his friends and neighbors, but this was not the reason God chose him.

*God chose him because He wanted to choose him.*

*And when God spoke to him, he listened; when God promised, he trusted; when God commanded, he obeyed.*

*When any person comes to Jesus Christ, God demands of him a pilgrimage from his old pattern of living into a new kind of life, just as Abraham's faith separated him from paganism and unbelief and started him toward a new land and a new kind of life. "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17). Salvation brings separation from the world. The Lord works in the heart the total willingness to leave behind everything that is not pleasing to Him. He cannot lead us into new ways of living until He leads us out of the old.*

We should respond, "I don't know what You are going to do with me, Lord, but I'm going to drop all those old things. I don't know what You're going to substitute for them, but I'm going to let them go."

That is the attitude of the faith pilgrim. *The life of faith begins with the willingness to leave one's Ur, one's own place of sin and unbelief—to leave the system of the world.*

*"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" ([Rom. 12:2](#); cf. [2 Cor. 6:14](#); [Gal. 1:4](#)).*

**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.

*The force that makes us want to hold on to the old life is sometimes called worldliness. Worldliness may be an act, but primarily it is an attitude. It is wanting to do things that are sinful or selfish or worthless, whether we actually do them or not. It is wanting men's praise whether we ever receive it or not. It is outwardly holding to high standards of conduct, but inwardly longing to live like the rest of the world. The worst sort of worldliness is religious worldliness, because it pretends to be godly. It holds to God's standards outwardly (usually adding a few of its own), but it is motivated by selfish, worldly desires.*

*It is pretentious and hypocritical. This was the Pharisees' great sin, as Jesus so often pointed out.*

*Worldliness is not so much what we do as what we want to do. It is not determined so much by what our actions are as by where our heart is.*

Some people do not commit certain sins only because they are afraid of the consequences, others because of what people will think, others from a sense of self-righteous satisfaction in resisting—all the while having a strong desire for these sins. It is the desire for sin that is the root of worldliness, and from which the believer is to be separated. *"Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* ([1 John 2:15](#); cf. [James 4:4](#)).

*The root meaning of holiness is separation, being set apart for God.*

One of the surest marks of the demise of worldliness is a change in desires, in loves.

**As we grow in Christ and in love for Him, our love for the things of the world diminishes. They will simply lose their attraction. We will not want to do them like we used to.**

The pilgrimage of faith begins by separating ourselves from the world, and as we concentrate on Jesus and fellowship with Him, soon we do not care about the things we once loved so much. When we slip and engage in them, we hate what we do in the weakness of the flesh (cf. [Rom. 7:14-25](#)).

Paradoxical as it may seem at first, **the highest mark of spiritual maturity is being able to do what we want to do.** "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward" ([Heb. 11:24-26](#)). **Moses did not forsake Egypt because he had to or because he felt obligated to, but because he wanted to. Egypt had lost its attraction. It could not compare with what Christ**

**offered.** In this regard the spiritually mature Christian is like the worldly person—he does what he wants to do. The great difference is that **the mature Christian wants what God wants.**

## **The Patience of Faith**

*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; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (11:9-10)*

The second standard of faith mentioned here seems to be somewhat at odds with the first. **As a pilgrim, Abraham** was immediately willing to give up his homeland, his friends, his business, his religion—everything. He **wasted no time putting all these things behind him. But faith also has a time for waiting and for being patient.**

**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. *He lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land.*

As a transient in the land, he had to be patient. Because the land was promised to him, patience must have been all the harder. He may have needed patience in Haran, too. But he never expected to possess Haran; it was never promised.

All the rest of his life, however, Abraham walked up and down the land God had promised him, yet never owned more than a small plot in which to bury Sarah ([Gen. 23:9-20](#)).

*The land was promised but never possessed.*

Abraham's faith required a great deal of patience in order to live without grumbling as an alien in his own land.

Abraham waited patiently for the really valuable things. He never saw God's promise fulfilled; he just waited and waited and waited. Often the hardest times for us as believers are the in-between times, the times of waiting. We are tempted to say, even to God, "Promises! Promises!" Abraham spent a great deal of time waiting. He waited long years for the son of promise, who was finally given. He waited all his life for the land of promise, which was never given. Yet he waited and watched and worked in the patient belief that God is faithful.

*If we knew that Christ would be coming in a month, we would give full attention to forsaking sin, praying, witnessing, serving, and to all the other things of our heavenly Father's business. To devote a whole month entirely to the Lord would not be so hard if we knew that it would all be over that soon. But to be about His*

business month after month, year after year, with His promises seemingly no nearer being fulfilled than when we were first saved, takes patience.

**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](#)).*

**It is discouraging to pray and trust and work and see no results.**

A mother may pray for 15, 20, or 30 years for the salvation of her son, and never see him come to Christ. A minister may serve in a church faithfully for ten years and see little evidence of spiritual growth.

**Noah worked for more than 100 years on the ark, preaching all the while. Progress on the ark was unimaginably slow and success in witnessing was nil. Yet he continued to build and to preach until both were finished.**

***True faith is deaf to doubt, dumb to discouragement, and blind to impossibility. No matter what it experiences, it sees only the promised success.***

**The secret of Abraham's patience was his hope in the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of God. His ultimate Promised Land was heaven, just as ours is.**

Even had he possessed the land of Canaan in his lifetime, it would not have been his ultimate inheritance.

***He was patient because his eyes were on the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.***

As important as the earthly land was to him and to God's promise, he looked up toward the heavenly land, which he knew he would inherit without fail.

*In one sense it is possible "to be so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good." But in a much deeper sense, it is impossible to be of any real earthly good unless we are heavenly minded. Only the heavenly minded will have the patience to continue faithful in God's work when it becomes hard, unappreciated, and seemingly unending. There is no greater cure for discouragement, fatigue, or self-pity than to think of being in the presence of the Lord one day and of spending eternity with Him. We should make no apology for being heavenly minded.*

It is when we concentrate on things below that we live and die with every little thing that goes wrong or seems to last too long or is not successful or appreciated. That is why Paul tells us to set our minds "on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" ([Col. 3:2](#)).

When our minds are on heaven we will be patient with what happens down here.

If we look continually at the things of this world—its trials, troubles, and struggles on the one hand, or its money, fame, and pleasures on the other, then we cannot help becoming absorbed in the impatient desires of the flesh. But if we keep focusing on heaven, on God, on Jesus Christ, then we do not care about what goes on here. *"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus," Paul tells Timothy. "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier"*

([2 Tim. 2:3-4](#)).

**The divine city is called many things in Scripture, but perhaps its most encouraging name is the one Ezekiel gave it: "The LORD is there" (Ezek. 48:35). Of all the things about it that are beautiful and inviting, by far the most beautiful and most inviting is that the Lord is there.**

Moses' forty years in the wilderness taking Israel to the Promised Land were the most demanding years of his life. But the previous forty years may have been the hardest as far as patience was concerned. He had been trained in pharaoh's court, treated as pharaoh's son, and then forced to flee for his life into the desert, where for this middle forty years he tended sheep for his father-in-law. He must often have been tempted to think that his talent, abilities, and training were going to waste. But "he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen" ([Heb. 11:27](#)). Like Abraham, Moses' eyes were on God, not his circumstances.

## **The Power of Faith**

*By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised; therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. ([11:11-12](#))*

***Faith is powerful. Faith sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, touches the intangible, and accomplishes the impossible.*** Unfortunately, some faith is all talk and never really gets down to action. True faith is active, powerfully active.

**Faith was active in the miracle of Isaac's birth. From the human standpoint, it was impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a child.** Not only had Sarah always been barren ([Gen. 16:1](#)), but by the time she was 90 years of age she was far **beyond the proper time of life** for childbearing. Yet at that age she conceived and gave birth to the promised son ([Gen. 21:2](#)).

The Genesis account gives no indication that Sarah ever showed much faith in God. Both Abraham and Sarah, on different occasions, had laughed at God's promise of a son in their old age ([Gen. 17:17](#); [18:12](#)), but Sarah had even taken matters into her own hands by persuading Abraham to have a son by her maid, Hagar ([16:1-4](#)).

**She did not trust God's promise and was bent on doing things her own way, which, she soon found out, was not the way either of obedience or of happiness.**

Her idea and Abraham's acquiescence produced a son, Ishmael, whose descendants from that day to this have been a plague on the descendants of the son of promise. Ishmael became the progenitor of the Arabs and every Jew since his birth has faced the antagonism of the Arab world because of Abraham's and Sarah's disobedience. *Sarah's impatience was costly.*

If we study [Hebrews 11:11](#) carefully, I believe we discover that the faith mentioned here does not apply to Sarah but rather for her. Received ability to conceive (*katabolēn spermatos*) means literally "to lay down seed." A woman, however, does not lay down the seed that produce conception. This phrase, therefore, must refer to Abraham, making him the understood subject of the sentence. It seems best to construe the phrase *autē Sarra* as a dative of accompaniment or association. In other words, the verse could be saying that Abraham, in association with Sarah, received power to lay down seed. I believe the faith was Abraham's, not Sarah's. Through Abraham's faith God miraculously fulfilled His promise.

*Therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. ([11:12](#))*

**Abraham had children upon children, the whole of the people of Israel. Every Jew that ever has been and ever will be born is a result of Abraham's faith. Such is the power of faith.**

Abraham's faith was in God. God's promise of a special son and of innumerable descendants was the basis of Abraham's faith. Jesus said, "*All things are possible to him who believes*" ([Mark 9:23](#)), and "*With God all things are possible*" ([Matt. 19:26](#)). God's power and will are on one side and man's trust is on the other. Whatever we know to be God's will, faith has the power to accomplish.

If God is unable to meet any of our needs, it is simply because we do not entrust them to Him. He gives us many things for which we never ask and of which we are often unaware. But many other things, especially spiritual blessings He has promised, we cannot receive because we are not open to them. Paul claimed, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" ([Phil. 4:13](#)), and he reminds us of "Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" ([Eph. 3:20](#)). God's power is for us to claim according to His will. That the things claimed seem impossible has no bearing on the matter. The only hindrance to fulfillment is lack of faith.

## **The Positiveness of Faith**

*All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. ([11:13-16](#))*

## **Not Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, ever possessed the Promised Land.**

In fact **it was almost 500 years after Jacob died that Israel first began to possess Canaan.**

*All these died in faith, without receiving the promises.*

**Far from being a lament, however, this statement is a positive declaration that these men died in perfect hope and assurance of fulfillment.**

*For the person of faith, God's promise is as good as the reality. His promise of the glory ahead was as encouraging and certain to the patriarchs as actually possessing it could have been.*

These men of faith did not know what was happening. God had given them no inside information, no word as to when or how the promises would be fulfilled. He only gave the promises, and that was enough. They had a sampling of the Promised Land. **They walked on it and pastured their flocks on it and raised their children on it, but they were not impatient to possess it. It was enough to possess it *from a distance*, because their primary concern was for a *better country, that is a heavenly one.***

In the meantime they were quite happy to be **strangers and exiles on the earth**. In the ancient world **strangers** (*zenoi*) were often regarded with hatred, suspicion, and contempt. They had few rights, even by the standards of that day. They were also **exiles** (*parepidēmoi*), pilgrims or sojourners. **They were refugees in their own Promised Land. But these faithful patriarchs were passing through Canaan to a better place, and they did not mind.**

The most positive thing about our faith is not what we can see or hold or measure, but the promise that one day we will forever be with the Lord. Christians whose faith does not extend to heaven will have their eyes on the things of this world and will wonder why they are not happier in the Lord. **Nothing in this life, including God's most abundant earthly blessings, will give a believer the satisfaction and joy that come with absolute assurance of future glory.**

David declared, *"One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD"* ([Ps. 27:4](#)).

Job, after unbelievable trials, destitution, and illness, could say, *"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God"* ([Job 19:25-26](#)).



*This is the hope and the security of the believer—  
the positiveness of faith.*

*It is people of such faith that God blesses.*

*He is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

Regardless of what we are in ourselves, if we trust Him, God is not ashamed to be called our

God. *"Those who honor Me I will honor,"* God says ([1 Sam. 2:30](#)).

**The patriarchs honored God, and God honored them.**

*Nothing is so honoring to Him as the life of faith.  
In fact, nothing honors Him but the life of faith.*

## **The Proof of Faith**

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type. ([11:17-19](#))*

**The proof of Abraham's faith was his willingness to  
give back to God everything he had, including the  
son of promise, whom he had miraculously  
received because of his faith.**

**After all the waiting and wondering, the son had been given  
by God. Then, before the son was grown, God asked for him  
back, and Abraham obeyed.**

Abraham knew that the covenant, which could only be fulfilled through Isaac, was unconditional. He knew, therefore, that God would do whatever was necessary, including raising Isaac from the dead, to keep His covenant.

*He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead.* The thought of sacrificing Isaac must have grieved Abraham terribly, but he knew that he would have his son back. He knew that God would not, in fact could not, take his son away permanently, or else He would have to go back on His own word, which is impossible.

*If Noah illustrates the duration of faith,  
Abraham shows the depth of faith.*

In tremendous, monumental faith Abraham brought Isaac to the top of Mt. Moriah and prepared to offer him to God. He believed in resurrection from the dead even before God revealed the doctrine. He had to believe in resurrection, because, if God allowed him to carry out the command to sacrifice Isaac, resurrection was the only way God could keep His promise.

As it turned out, because he did not actually die, **Isaac became only a type of the resurrection. He was offered but he was not slain. God provided a substitute.**

*It was the fact that Abraham offered up Isaac that proved his faith.*

*The final standard of faith, its real proof, is willingness to sacrifice.*

*"If anyone wishes to come after Me," Jesus commands, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" ([Matt. 16:24](#)).*

*"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" ([Rom. 12:1](#)).*

**\*\*\* When John Bunyan was in jail for preaching the gospel, he was deeply concerned about his family. He was particularly grieved about his little blind daughter, for whom he had a special love. He wrote, "I saw in this condition I was a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children. Yet, thought I, I must do it; I must do it. The dearest idol I have known, what err that idol be, help me to tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee." \*\*\***

*The patriarchs, therefore, held to the five great standards of faith: its pilgrimage, in separation from the world; its patience, in waiting for God to work; its power, in doing the impossible; its positiveness, in focusing on God's eternal promise; and its proof, in obedient sacrifice.*

## Faith That Defeats Death ([Hebrews 11:20-22](#))

*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones. ([11:20-22](#))*

**Matthew Henry said**, *"Though the grace of faith is of universal use throughout the Christian's life, yet it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has its great work to do at the very last, to help believers to finish well, to die to the Lord so as to honor Him, by patience, hope and joy so as to leave a witness behind them of the truth of God's Word and the excellency of His ways."*

God is glorified when His people leave this world with their flags flying at full mast.

***If anyone should die triumphantly  
it should be believers.***

When the Holy Spirit triumphs over our flesh, when the world is consciously and gladly left behind for heaven, when there is anticipation and glory in our eyes as we enter into the presence of the Lord, our dying is pleasing to the Lord. *"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones"* ([Ps. 116:15](#)).

The three patriarchs mentioned in [Hebrews 11:20-22](#) illustrate the power of faith in facing death.

**These men had not always lived faithfully.** They trusted God imperfectly, just as we do. All three men's names appear frequently and favorably in Scripture, and we are inclined to think of them as models of the life of faith. In some regards they were. Joseph especially stands out. Though he was hated by his brothers and sold into slavery, he trusted and obeyed God amid many temptations and hardships, while completely separated from his family in a pagan foreign land.

**The emphasis of this passage, however, is on the faith that Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph exhibited at the ends of their lives. Each one faced death in full, confident faith.**

For that they are in the Hebrews heroes gallery...

Many believers find it difficult to anticipate and to face death. Yet...

*Christians who, for the most part, have walked with God faithfully, often find that the last hours of their life are the sweetest.*

Whatever the ups and downs of their lives, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph went out basking in the sunlight of true faith.

**What makes the dying faith of these three men so significant is that, like Abraham, they died without seeing the fulfillment of God's promises.**

They passed them on to their children by faith.

*They had received the promises by faith and they passed them on by faith.*

**In His covenant with Abraham, God had promised three things—possession of the land of Canaan, the creation of a great nation of his descendants, and the blessing of the world through these descendants. But**

Abraham never saw any of these things come to pass. He died in faith, saying, "Isaac, you will see the beginnings of these promises." But Isaac also died in faith, saying the same thing to Jacob; and so Jacob also to Joseph.

*Hebrews 11:13 applies to all four men:*

*"All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."*

Yet they were so confident in God's word that they passed on the promises to their children.

**They believed what they had never seen, and they passed on what they had never seen to their children.**

*That is the assurance of faith.*

*They had no inheritance to pass on but the promises of God, and these they considered a great treasure to bequeath their children.*

*They had not seen the land possessed, the nation established, or the world blessed, but they saw the promises, and that was enough.*

These men never doubted that the promises would come true. *They did not die in the despair of unfulfilled dreams, but in the perfect peace of unfulfilled promises, confident because they were God's promises.*

They knew by faith that God would fulfill the promises because they knew He was a covenant—keeping God and a God of truth. They died saying, "They will come. In God's time the fulfillments will come." **They died defeating death, knowing that, even though they died, God's promises could not die.** That is a magnificent kind of faith, the kind of faith God honors.

Just as the saints mentioned in [verses 4-19](#), these three men are presented to show that the principles of salvation by faith and of pleasing God by faith did not originate with the New Covenant. *Faith has always been the way, never works.*

**Without a single exception, every man of God has been a man of faith.** Not Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph was saved by works. All were saved by faith.

*Without faith it has always been impossible to please God* ([Heb. 11:6](#)).

## Isaac's Faith

*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.*  
([11:20](#))

Just as his father had done with him, Isaac passed on the blessings of God's promise to his sons **by faith**.

He had absolute certainty that they would come to pass. **For the time being, the promises were the inheritance, which the patriarchs cherished as much as most people cherish material possessions, fame, and power.**

Isaac lived longer than any of the other patriarchs, yet less space in Genesis and Hebrews is devoted to him than to the others. Whereas Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph each have about twelve chapters in Genesis that center on them, Isaac has just over two—chapters 26 and 27 and about half of [25](#). Isaac was easily the least spectacular and the most ordinary of the four. He was less dynamic and colorful, being generally quiet and passive. And, overall, he probably had the weakest faith. We know more of his failures than of his successes.

Because of a famine, Isaac had moved his family to Gerar. While he was there, God spoke to him in a remarkable and encouraging vision. *"Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"* ([Gen. 26:3-4](#)). In other words, **the covenant promises to Abraham were passed on to Isaac directly by God.** Those promises alone should have kept Isaac from worry and fear, for God could not have fulfilled them if Isaac were not protected. Not only that, but the Lord specifically told him, "I will be with you and bless you."

Yet **at the first sign of possible danger, Isaac proved faithless.** When the men of Gerar asked about Rebekah, he said she was his sister instead of his wife, for fear that one of those Philistines might kill him in order to have her ([v. 7](#)). In that, of course, he was merely following in his father's footsteps, because Abraham had twice lied in the same way about Sarah ([Gen. 12:13](#); [20:2](#)). Rebekah was beautiful and the Philistines were not above doing what Isaac feared. But **rather than trusting the Lord for protection, he lied.** Not only that, but he seems to have been more concerned for himself than for Rebekah.

God disclosed to King Abimelech Rebekah's true relationship to Isaac, and the king put them both under a protective order. **Abimelech, a pagan Philistine, was more concerned about the ethics of the matter than was Isaac, a chosen man of God.** **He rebuked Isaac sharply**, saying, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would



have brought guilt upon us" ([v. 10](#)). God's grace prevailed, though it was through an unbeliever, with no help, or even expectation, from Isaac.

**The Lord continued to bless Isaac**, who became wealthy. The envy of the Philistines caused them to keep filling up his wells until he finally moved out of their land, which seems to have been what the Lord wanted all along. At that point Isaac acknowledged God's hand in the matter. "At last the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" ([v. 22](#)). Yet even this statement shows little faith, because Isaac seems to be saying, "It's about time!"

Then he moved to Beersheba, which was part of the Promised Land, and perhaps the Lord now said, "It's about time." He had to get Isaac back into the land by the back door and almost by force. Again the Lord spoke to Isaac and repeated the covenant promises, and Isaac "built an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there" ([26:24-25](#)). **By His sovereign work, God brought the prodigal home. That is how grace operates.**

Isaac often was cowardly and spiritually weak, but he had earlier believed God and was established in the scroll of the faithful. He followed his father's example in some good things as well as some bad. Like Abraham, he trusted God for a son. Rebekah was barren, just as Sarah had been, and Isaac prayed earnestly for a son. "The LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived" ([Gen. 25:21](#)).

*Isaac was basically materialistic.*

**He lived mostly by sight and by taste.** He was partial to Esau, possibly because this son was a hunter and provided his father with many good meals. Even when Isaac was old and about to die, he asked Esau to go out and kill "some game and prepare a savory dish" for him before he pronounced the blessing on this elder son ([27:7](#)). **He was thinking more of his stomach than of God's promise.** He must have known from Rebekah that God intended for Jacob to receive the inheritance rather than Esau ([25:23](#)), and he must have known from both his sons that Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob ([25:33](#)). Yet he was determined to give the blessing to Esau. This story is of no credit to Isaac, Esau, or Jacob. Isaac insisted on giving the blessing to the son who he knew was not God's choice. Esau, who had despised and sold his birthright, thought he could just as easily buy it back. And Jacob, at his mother's instigation, tried to secure the blessing by deception rather than by faith.

*The entire family acted shamefully.*

## **Father and son tried to do the wrong thing in the wrong way, and mother and son tried to accomplish the right thing but in the wrong way.**

God produced the outcome that Rebekah and Jacob wanted, but not for their reasons or by their methods. He did not honor what they did any more than what Isaac and Esau did. **God only honors faith, and none of these had acted in faith.** The right outcome was the result of His faithfulness, not theirs.

Not until the irreversibility of the blessing was obvious did Isaac begin to evidence faith. *If Jonah was the reluctant prophet, Isaac was the reluctant patriarch.* Only when he realized that the blessing was going to be on God's man regardless, did he acquiesce. He finally said yes to God's way. God had to box him into a corner before he believed; but he did believe. As he faced death, he blessed Jacob with the blessing that neither he nor his father had possessed and that neither Jacob nor his sons would possess. Isaac blessed Jacob in faith, knowing that God would fulfill the promises in His own way and in His own time.

In some ways Isaac was a blot on the Old Testament record. But in the end he was God's man. He submitted and believed and obeyed.

## **Jacob's Faith**

*By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. (11:21)*

**Jacob's life was like his father's in many ways. It was up and down spiritually. Sometimes he walked by faith and sometimes he stumbled by sight. He had times of great faith and times of fear and anxiety.** He bargained with God on occasion ([Gen. 28:20-21](#)) and on other occasions he readily acknowledged God's blessing ([31:5](#)). He reverently praised the Lord when he had the dream of the heavenly ladder ([28:16-17](#)), and once he was so intent on receiving God's blessing that he wrestled with Him all night ([32:24-26](#)).

Unlike his father, Jacob did not try to circumvent God's plan for his heirs. Joseph, though younger than all his brothers except Benjamin, was the chosen son to bless, just as Jacob, though younger, was chosen above Esau. In fact Joseph received a double blessing, in that his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were both **blessed**; although again the younger son, Ephraim, received

the greater blessing ([48:19](#)). Consequently, instead of only one tribe descending from Joseph, as with his brothers, two tribes (often referred to as half-tribes) descended from him.

As he was dying, Jacob blessed his son through his two grandsons. *"Then Israel [Jacob's new name] said to Joseph, 'Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. And I give you one portion more than your brothers'"* ([48:21-22](#)).

*Once again, what was never possessed was passed on in faith. Jacob died as a man of faith.*

## **Joseph's Faith**

*By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones. ([11:22](#))*

### **Joseph spent all of his adult life in Egypt.**

Though a fourth-generation heir of the promise, he could not claim even to have sojourned in the Promised Land, much less to have inherited it. It had been some two hundred years since God made the initial covenant with Abraham. Two hundred years of promise, and no fulfillment in sight. **In fact, by the time of Joseph's death, none of Abraham's descendants (that is, the descendants of promise) lived in the Promised Land at all.**

Because of the famine in Canaan, Joseph had brought his father and his brothers to Egypt. Jacob was carried back to Canaan after he died, and Joseph would be satisfied if only **his bones** could be buried there. If he could not inherit the land, at least the land could "inherit" him. It was not until the Exodus that Joseph's bones were actually taken to Canaan (Ex. 13:19), but his heart and his hope had always been there.

He had to look ahead to see the promise, yet he saw it clearly and confidently. *"I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob"* ([Gen. 50:24](#)).

While he was making his brothers swear to take his bones back to Canaan, he repeated the assuring words of faith, "God will surely take care of you" ([v. 25](#)).

**All three of these men believed God in the face of death. Their faith had sometimes wavered in life, but it was strong and confident in death.**

*Death is the acid test of faith.*

For hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years, courts of law have taken a dying man's word at face value. The need for lying and deception is over, and what is said on a deathbed is usually believed. So with our testimony of faith. Not only is the need for hypocrisy and pretense over, but **it is extremely difficult to fake faith when you know you are facing eternity**. A dying man's faith is believable because a sham cannot stand this test.

**A Christian who fears death has a serious weakness in his faith, for to die in Christ is simply to be ushered into the Lord's presence.**

*"For to me, to live is Christ & to die is gain" ([Phil. 1:21](#)).*

*"Death is swallowed up in victory" ([1 Cor. 15:54](#)).*

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Hebrews

**Verse 8. By faith Abraham. There is no difficulty in determining that Abraham was influenced by faith in God. The case is even stronger than that of Noah, for it is expressly declared, [Genesis 15:6](#), "And he believed, in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Comp. [Romans 4:1](#), and following. In the illustrations of the power of faith in**

this chapter, the apostle appeals to two instances in which it was exhibited by Abraham, "the father of the faithful." Each of these required confidence in God of extraordinary strength, and each of them demanded a special and honourable mention. The first was that when he left his own country to go to a distant land of strangers, ([Hebrews 11:8-10](#);) the other when he showed his readiness to sacrifice his own son in obedience to the will of God, [Hebrews 11:17-19](#).

*When he was called.* [Genesis 12:1](#): "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

*Into a Place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed.* To Palestine, or the land of Canaan, though that was not indicated at the time.

*And he went out not knowing whither he went.* [Genesis 12:4](#). Abraham at that time took with him Sarai, and Lot the son of his brother, and "the souls that they had gotten in Haran." Terah, the father of Abraham, started on the journey with them, but died in Haran, [Genesis 11:31,32](#).

**The original call was made to Abraham, [Genesis 12:1](#), [Acts 7:2,3](#); but he appears to have induced his father and his nephew to accompany him. At this time he had no children, ([Genesis 11:30](#),) though it seems probable that Lot had, [Genesis 12:6](#). Some, however, understand the expression in [Genesis 12:6](#), "and the souls they had gotten in Haran," as referring to the servants or domestics that they had in various ways procured, and to the fact that Abraham and Lot gradually drew around them a train of dependents and followers who were disposed to unite with them, and accompany them wherever they went.** The Chaldee Paraphrast understands it of the *proselytes* which Abraham had made there-"All the souls which he had subdued under the law." When it is said that Abraham "went out not knowing whither he went,"

it must be understood as meaning that he was ignorant to what country he would in fact be led. If it be supposed that he had some general intimation of the nature of that country, and of the direction in which it was situate, yet ***it must be remembered that the knowledge of geography was then exceedingly imperfect; that this was a distant country; that it lay beyond a pathless desert, and that probably no traveller had ever come from that land to apprise him what it was. All this serves to show what was the strength of the faith of Abraham.***

(\*) "when he was called" [Genesis 12:1,4](#)

**Verse 9.** *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country. The land of Canaan that had been promised to him and his posterity. He resided there as if he were a stranger and sojourner. He had no possessions there which he did not procure by honest purchase; he owned no land in fee-simple, except the small piece which he bought for a burial-place. See [Genesis 23:7-20](#). In all respects he lived there as if he had no peculiar right in the soil; as if he never expected to own it; as if he were in a country wholly owned by others. He exercised no privileges which might not have been exercised by any foreigner, and which was not regarded as a right of common-that of feeding his cattle in any unoccupied part of the land; and he would have had no power of ejecting any other persons, excepting that which any one might have enjoyed by the pre-occupancy of the pasture grounds.* **To all intents and purposes he was a stranger. Yet he seems to have lived in the confident and quiet expectation that that land would, at some period, come into the possession of his posterity.** It was a strong instance of *faith* that he should cherish this belief for so long a time, when he was a stranger there-when he gained no right in the soil, except in the small piece that was purchased as a burial-place for his wife-and when he saw old age coming on, and still the whole land in the possession of others.

*Dwelling in tabernacles.* In tents, the common mode of living in countries where the principal occupation is that of keeping flocks and herds. His dwelling thus in moveable tents looked little like its being his permanent possession.

***With Isaac and Jacob***, the heirs with him of the same promise. That is, the same thing occurred in regard to them which had to Abraham. ***They also*** lived in tents. They acquired no fixed property, and no title to the land, except to the small portion purchased as a burial-place. Yet they were heirs of the same promise as Abraham, that the land would be theirs.

Though it was still owned by others, and filled with its native inhabitants, yet they adhered to the belief that it would come into the possession of their families. In their movable habitations—in their migrations from place to place—they seem never to have doubted that the fixed habitation of their posterity was to be there, and: that all that had been promised would be certainly fulfilled.

(\*) "dwelling" [Genesis 13:3,18](#), [18:1,9](#)

**Verse 10.** *For he looked for a city which hath foundations.* It has been doubted to what the apostle here refers. Grotius and some others suppose that he refers to Jerusalem, as a permanent dwelling for his posterity in contradistinction from the unsettled mode of life which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob led. But there is no evidence that Abraham looked forward to the building of such a city, for no promise was made to him of this kind; and this interpretation falls evidently below the whole drift of the passage. Comp. [Hebrews 11:12,14-16](#), [12:22](#), [13:14](#). Phrases like that of "the city of God," "a city with foundations," "the new Jerusalem," and "the heavenly Jerusalem" in the time of the apostle, appear to have acquired a kind of technical signification. They referred to the area-of which Jerusalem, the seat of the worship of God, seems to have been regarded as the emblem. Thus in [Hebrews 12:22](#), the apostle speaks of the "heavenly Jerusalem," and in [Hebrews 13:14](#), he says, "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." In [Revelation 21:2](#), John says that he "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven," and proceeds in that chapter and the following to give a most beautiful description of it. Even so early as the time of Abraham, it would seem that the future blessedness of the righteous was foretold under the image of a splendid City reared on permanent foundations. It is remarkable that Moses does not mention this as an object of the faith of Abraham, and it is impossible to ascertain the degree of distinctness which this had in his view. It is probable that the apostle, in speaking of his faith in this particular, did not rely on any distinct record, or even any tradition, but spoke of his piety in the language which, he would use to characterize religion of any age, or in any individual, he was accustomed, in common with others of his time, to contemplate the future blessedness of the righteous under the image of a beautiful city; a place where the worship of God would be celebrated for ever—a city of which Jerusalem was the most striking representation to the mind of a Jew. It was natural for him to speak of

strong piety in this manner wherever it existed, and especially in such a case as that of Abraham, who left his own habitation to wander in a distant land. This fact showed that he regarded himself as a stranger and sojourner; and yet he had a strong expectation of a fixed habitation, and a permanent inheritance. He must, therefore, have looked on to the permanent abodes of the righteous; the heavenly city ; -and though he had an undoubted confidence that the promised land would be given to his posterity, yet, as he did not possess it himself, he must have looked for his own permanent abode to the fixed residence of the just in heaven.

*This passage seems to me to prove that Abraham had an expectation of future happiness after death.*

There is not the slightest evidence that he supposed there would be a magnificent and glorious capital where the Messiah would personally reign, and where the righteous dead, raised from their graves, would dwell in the second advent of the Redeemer. All that the passage fairly implies is, that while Abraham expected the possession of the promised land for his posterity, yet his faith looked beyond this for a permanent home in a future world.

*Whose builder and maker is God.* Which would not be reared by the agency of man, but of which God was the immediate and direct architect. This shows conclusively, I think, that the reference in this allusion to the "city" is not to Jerusalem, as Grotius supposes; but the language is just such as will appropriately describe heaven, represented as **a city reared without human hands or art, and founded and fashioned by the skill and power of the Deity; Comp. 2 Corinthians 5:1.**

The language here applied to God as the "architect" or framer of the universe is often used in the classic writers. See Kuinoel and Wetstein. The apostle here commends the faith of Abraham as eminently strong. The following *hints* will furnish topics of reflection to those who are disposed to inquire more fully into its strength.

(1.) The journey which he undertook was then a long and dangerous one. The distance from Haran to Palestine, by a direct route, was *not less than four hundred miles*, and this journey lay across a vast desert—a part of Arabia Deserta.

*That journey has always been tedious and perilous; but to see its real difficulty, we must put ourselves into the position in which the world was four thousand years ago.* There was no knowledge of the way;



no frequented path; no facility for travelling; no turnpike or railway; and such a journey then must have appeared incomparably more perilous than almost any which could now be undertaken.

(2.) He was going among strangers. Who they were he knew not; but the impression could not but have been made on his mind that they were strangers to religion, and that a residence among them would be anything but desirable.

(3.) He was leaving country, and home, and friends; the place of his birth and the graves of his fathers, with the moral certainty that he would see them no more.

(4.) He had no right to the country which he went to receive. *He could urge no claim on the ground of discovery, or inheritance, or conquest, at any former period; but though he went in a peaceful manner, and with no power to take it, and could urge no claim to it whatever, yet he went with the utmost confidence that it would be his. He did not even expect to buy it-for he had no means to do this,* and it seems never to have entered his mind to bargain for it in any way, except for the small portion that he needed for a burying ground.

(5.) He had no means of obtaining possession. He had no wealth to purchase it; no armies to conquer it; no title to it which could be enforced before the tribunals of the land. The prospect of obtaining it must have been distant, and probably he saw no means by which it was to be done. In such a case, *his only hope could be in God.*

(6.) It is not impossible that the enterprise in that age might have been treated by the friends of the patriarch as perfectly wild and visionary. The prevailing religion evidently was idolatry, and the claim which Abraham set up to a special call from the Most High, might have been deemed entirely fanatical. To start off on a journey through a pathless desert; to leave his country and home, and all that he held dear, when he himself knew not whither he went; to go with no means of conquest, but with the

expectation that the distant and unknown land would be given him, could not but have been regarded as a singular instance of visionary hope. *The whole transaction, therefore was in the highest degree an act of simple confidence in God, where there was no human basis or calculation, and where all the principles on which men commonly act would have led him to pursue just the contrary course.* It is, therefore, not without reason, that the faith of Abraham is so commended.

(\*) "city" [Hebrews 12:22, 13:14](#)

(\*) "builder and maker" [Revelation 21:2,10](#)

**Verse 11.** *Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed.*

***The word "herself" here-αυτη-implies that there was something remarkable in the fact that she should manifest this faith.***

Perhaps there may be reference here to the incredulity with which she at first received the announcement that she should have a child, [Genesis 18:11,13](#). Even her strong incredulity was overcome; and though everything seemed to render what was announced impossible, and though she was so much disposed to laugh at the very suggestion at first, yet **her unbelief was overcome, and she ultimately credited the Divine promise.**

**The apostle does not state the authority for his assertion that the strength of Sarah was derived from her faith, nor when particularly it was exercised.**

The argument seems to be, that here was a case where all human probabilities were against what was predicted, and where, therefore, there must have been simple trust in God.

Nothing else but *faith* could have led her to believe that in her old age she would have borne a son.

*When she was past age.* She was at this time more than ninety years of age, [Genesis 17:17](#).  
Comp. [Genesis 18:11](#).

*Because she judged him faithful who had promised.* She had no other ground of confidence or expectation. **All human probability was against the supposition that, at her time of life, she would be a mother.**

(\*) "Sarah" [Genesis 21:1,2](#)

(\*) "faithful" [Hebrews 10:23](#)

**Verse 12.** *Therefore sprang there even of one.* From a single individual. What is observed here by the apostle as worthy of remark is, that **the whole Jewish people sprang from one man, and that, as the reward of his strong faith, he was made the father and founder of a nation.**

*And him as good as dead.* So far as the subject under discussion is concerned. To human appearance there was no more probability that he would have a son at that period of life than that the dead would have.

*So many as the stars in the sky, etc.* **An innumerable multitude.** This was agreeable to the promise, [Genesis 15:5](#), [22:17](#). The phrases here used are often employed to denote a vast multitude, as nothing appears more numerous than the stars of heaven, or than the sands that lie on the shores of the ocean. The strength of faith in this case was, that there was simple confidence in God in the fulfilment of a promise where all human probabilities were against it. This is, therefore, an illustration of the nature of faith. It does not depend on human reasoning, on analogy, on philosophical probabilities, on the foreseen operation of natural laws; but on the mere assurance of God—no matter what may be the difficulties to human view, or the improbabilities against it.

(\*) "so many" [Genesis 17:17](#), [Romans 4:17](#)

**Verse 13.** *These all died in faith.* That is those who had been just mentioned-Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah. It was true of Abel and Noah also, that they died in faith, but they are not included in *this* declaration, for the "promises" were not particularly entrusted to them; and if the word "these" be made to include them, it must include Enoch also, who did not die at all. The phrase here used, "these all *died in faith*," does not mean that they died in the exercise or possession of religion, but more strictly that **they died not having possessed what was the object of their faith.**

*They had been looking for something future, which they did not obtain during their lifetime, and died believing that it would yet be theirs.*

*Not having received the promises.* That is, not having received the fulfilment of the promises; or the promised blessings. The promises themselves they had received. **Comp. Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4,11,16, Galatians 3:14, Hebrews 11:33, 39.** **In all these places the word promise is used by metonymy for the thing promised.**

*But having seen them afar off.* **Having seen that they would be fulfilled in future times. Comp. John 8:56.** It is probable that the apostle here means that they saw the entire fulfilment of all that the promises embraced in the future that is, the bestowment of the land of Canaan, the certainty of a numerous posterity, and of the entrance into the heavenly Canaan—the world of fixed and permanent rest. According to the reasoning of the apostle here, the "promises" to which they trusted included all these things.

*And were persuaded of them.* Had no doubt of their reality.

*And embraced them.* **This word implies more than our word embrace frequently does; that is, to receive as true. It means, properly, to draw to one's self; and then to embrace, as one does a friend from whom he has been separated.** It then means to greet, salute, welcome, and here means a joyful greeting of those promises; or a pressing them to the heart, as we do a friend. It was not a cold and formal reception of them, but a warm and hearty welcome.

Such is the nature of true faith when it embraces the promises of salvation. No act of pressing a friend to the bosom is ever more warm and cordial.

*And confessed that they were strangers.* Thus Abraham said, [Genesis 23:4](#), "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." That is, **he regarded himself as a foreigner; as having no home and no possessions there.** It was on this ground that he proposed to buy a burial place of the sons of Heth.

*And pilgrims.* This is the word—παρεπίδημος—which is used by Abraham, as rendered by the Seventy in [Genesis 23:4](#), and which is there translated "sojourner" in the common English version. The word *pilgrim* means, properly, a *wanderer, a traveller*, and particularly one who leaves his own country to visit a holy place. This sense does not *quite* suit the meaning here, or in [Genesis 23:4](#). The Hebrew word—תושב—means, properly, one who dwells in a place, and particularly one who is a mere resident without the rights of; a citizen. The Greek word means a by-resident; one who lives by another or among a people not his own. This is the idea here. It is not that they confessed themselves to be wanderers, or that they had left their home to visit a holy place, but that *they resided as mere sojourners* in a country that was not theirs. What might be their ultimate destination, or their purpose, is not implied in the meaning of the word. *They were such as reside awhile among another people, but have no permanent home there.*

*On the earth.* The phrase here used—ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς—might mean merely on the land of Canaan, but the apostle evidently uses it in a larger sense as denoting the earth in general. There can be no doubt that this accords with the views which the patriarchs had-regarding themselves not only as strangers in the land of Canaan, but feeling that the

*same thing was true in reference to their whole residence upon the earth-that it was not their permanent home.*

(\*) "in faith" "according to"

(\*) "promises" "the promised blessings"

(\*) "confessed" [1 Chronicles 29:15](#), [1 Peter 2:11](#)

**Verse 14.** *For they that say such things*, etc. That speak of themselves as having come into' a land of strangers; and that negotiate for a small piece of land, not to cultivate, but to bury their dead. So we should think of any strange people coming among us now-who lived in tents; who frequently changed their residence; who became the purchasers of no land except to bury their dead, and who never spake of becoming permanent residents. We should think that they were in search of some place as their home, and that they had not yet found it. Such people were the Hebrew patriarchs. They lived and acted just as if they had not yet found a permanent habitation, but were travelling in search of one.

**Verse 15.** *And truly if they had been mindful of that country*, etc, If they had remembered it with sufficient interest and affection to have made them desirous to return.

*They might have had opportunity to have returned.*

*The journey was not so long or perilous that they could not have retraced their steps, it would have been no more difficult or dangerous for them to do that than it was to make the journey at first. This shows that their remaining as strangers and sojourners in the land of Canaan was voluntary.*

*They preferred it, with all its inconveniences and hardships, to return to their native land. The same thing is true of all the people of God now. If they choose to return to the world, and to engage again in all its vain pursuits, there is nothing to hinder them.*

There are "opportunities" enough. There are abundant inducements held out. There are numerous gay and worldly friends who would regard it as a matter of joy and triumph to have them return to vanity and folly again. They would welcome them to their society; rejoice to have them participate in their pleasures; and be willing that they should share in the honours and the wealth of the world. And they might do it. There are multitudes of Christians who could grace, as they once did, the ball-room; who could charm the social party by song and wit; who could rise to the highest posts of office, or compete successfully with others in the race for the acquisition of fame. They have seen and tasted enough of the vain pursuits of the world, to satisfy them with their vanity; *they are convinced of the sinfulness of making worldly things the great objects of living; their affections are now fixed on higher and nobler objects, and they choose not to return to those pursuits again, but to live as strangers and sojourners on the earth—for there is nothing more voluntary than religion.*

Verse 16. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.* That is, at the time referred to when they confessed that they were strangers and sojourners, *they showed that they sought a better country than the one which they had left. They lived as if they had no expectation of a permanent residence on earth, and were looking to another world.* The argument of the apostle here appears to be based on what is apparent from the whole history, that they had a confident belief that the land of Canaan would be given to "*their posterity*"; but as for *themselves* they had no expectation of permanently dwelling there, but looked to a home in the heavenly country. Hence they formed no plans for conquest; they laid claim to no title in the soil; they made no purchases of farms for cultivation;

they lived and died without owning any land, except enough to bury their dead. All this appears as if *they* looked for a final home in a "better country, even an heavenly."

*Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.* **Since they had such an elevated aim, he was willing to speak of himself as their God and Friend.** They acted as became his friends, and he was not ashamed of the relation which he sustained to them. **The language to which the apostle evidently refers here is that which is found in Exodus 3:6,** *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* We are not to suppose that God is ever *ashamed* of anything that he does.

*The meaning here is, that they had acted in such a manner that it was fit that he should show towards them the character of a Benefactor, Protector, and Friend.*

*For he hath prepared for them a city.* Such as they had expected—a heavenly residence, Hebrews 11:10. There is evidently here a reference to heaven, represented as a city—the New Jerusalem—prepared for his people by God himself. Comp. Matthew 25:34. Thus they obtained what they had looked for by faith. The wandering and unsettled patriarchs to whom the promise was made, and who showed all their lives that they regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims, were admitted to the home of permanent rest; and their posterity was ultimately admitted to the possession of the promised land. **Nothing could more certainly demonstrate that the patriarchs believed in a future state than this passage.** They did not expect a permanent home on earth. They made no efforts to enter into the possession of the promised land themselves. They quietly and calmly waited for the time when God would give it to their posterity; and, in the meantime, for themselves they looked forward to their permanent home in the heavens. Even in this early period of the world, therefore, there was the confident expectation of the future state. Comp. Matthew 22:31. We may remark, that *the life of the patriarchs was, in all essential respects, such as we should lead. They looked forward to heaven; they sought no permanent possessions here; they regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. So should we be.*



In our more fixed and settled habits of life; in our quiet homes; in our residence in the land in which we were born, and in the society of old and tried friends, we should yet regard ourselves as "strangers and sojourners."

*We have here no fixed abode.*

*The houses in which we dwell will soon be occupied by others; the paths in which we go will soon be trod by the feet of others; the fields which we cultivate will soon be ploughed and sown and reaped by others. Others will read the books which we read; sit down at the tables where we sit; lie on the beds where we repose; occupy the chambers where we shall die, and from whence we shall be removed to our graves. If we have any permanent home, it is in heaven; and that we have the faithful lives of the patriarchs teach us, and the unerring word of God everywhere assures us.*

(\*) "their God" [Exodus 3:6,15](#)

(\*) "city" [Hebrews 11:10](#)

**Verse 17.** *By faith Abraham.* **The apostle had stated one strong instance of the faith of Abraham, and he now refers to one still more remarkable**-the strongest illustration of faith, undoubtedly, which has ever been evinced in our world.

*When he was tried.* The word here used is rendered *tempted* in [Matthew 4:1,3, 16:1, 19:3, 22:18,35](#), and in twenty-two other places in the New Testament; *prove*, in [John 6:6](#); *hath gone about*, in [Acts 24:6](#); *examine*, [2 Corinthians 13:6](#); and *tried*, in [Revelation 2:2,10, 3:10](#). It does not mean here, as it often does, to place inducements before one to lead him to do wrong, but **to subject his faith to a trial in order to test its genuineness and strength.** The meaning here is, that Abraham was placed in circumstances which showed what was the real strength of his confidence in God.

*Offered up Isaac.* That is, **he showed that he was ready and willing to make the sacrifice, and would have done it if he had not been restrained by the voice of the angel,** [Genesis 22:11,12.](#)

**So far as the intention of Abraham was concerned, the deed was done, for he had made every preparation for the offering, and was actually about to take the life of his son.**

*And he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son.* The promises particularly of a numerous posterity. The fulfilment of those promises depended on him whom he was now about to offer as a sacrifice. **If Abraham had been surrounded with children, or if no special promise of a numerous posterity had been made to him, this act would not have been so remarkable.** It would, in any case, have been a strong act of faith; it was peculiarly strong in his case, from the circumstances that he had an only son, and that the fulfilment of the promise depended on his life.

(\*) "tried" [Genesis 22:1, James 2:21](#)

**Verse 18.** *Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.* **Genesis 21:12.**

A numerous posterity had been promised to him. **It was there said expressly that this promise was not to be fulfilled through the son of Abraham by the bond-woman Hagar, but through Isaac.**

Of course, it was implied that Isaac was to reach manhood; and yet, notwithstanding this, and notwithstanding Abraham fully believed it, he prepared deliberately, in obedience to the Divine command, to put him to death. The phrase, "thy seed be called," means, that his posterity was to be named after Isaac, or was to descend only from him. The word "*called*," in the Scriptures, is often equivalent to the verb *to be*. See [Isaiah 56:7](#). To *name or call* a thing, was the same as to say that it was, or that it existed. It does not mean here that his spiritual children were to be called or selected from among the posterity of Isaac, but that the posterity promised to Abraham would descend neither from Ishmael nor the sons of Keturah, but in the line of Isaac. This is a strong circumstance insisted on by the apostle, to show the strength of Abraham's faith. It was shown not only by his willingness to offer up the child of his old age-his only son by his beloved wife, but by his readiness, at the command of God, to sacrifice even him on whom the fulfilment of the promises depended.

(\*) "Of whom" "To"

(\*) "That in Isaac" [Genesis 21:12](#)

**Verse 19.** *Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.* And that he *would do it*; for so Abraham evidently believed, and this idea is plainly implied in the whole narrative. There was no other way in which the promise could be fulfilled; and Abraham reasoned justly in the case. He had received the promise of a numerous posterity, he had been told expressly that it was to be through this favourite child, he was now commanded to put him to death as a sacrifice, and he prepared to do it. To fulfil these promises, therefore, there was no other way possible but for him to be raised up from the dead, and Abraham fully believed that it would be done. **The child had been given to him at first in a supernatural manner, and he was prepared, therefore, to believe that he would be restored to him again by miracle.** He did not doubt that he who had given him to him at first, in a manner so contrary to all human probability, could restore him again in a method as extraordinary, He *therefore*, anticipated that he would raise him up immediately from the dead. That this was the expectation of Abraham is apparent from the narrative in [Genesis 22:6](#): "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder, and worship, and come again to you;" in the plural-"and we will return;" that is, I and Isaac will return, for no other persons went with them, [Genesis 22:6](#). As Abraham went with the full expectation of sacrificing Isaac, and as he expected

Isaac to return with him, it follows that he believed that God would raise him up immediately from the dead.

*From whence also he received him in a figure.* There has been great difference of opinion as to the sense of this passage, but it seems to me to be plain. The obvious interpretation is, that he then received him by his being raised up from the altar *as if* from the dead. He was to Abraham dead. He had given him up. He had prepared to offer him as a sacrifice. He lay there before him as one who was dead. **From that altar he was raised up by direct Divine interposition, as if he was raised from the grave, and this was to Abraham a figure or a representation of the resurrection.** Other interpretations may be seen in Stuart, *in loc.* The following circumstances will illustrate the strength of Abraham's faith in this remarkable transaction.

(1.) The strong persuasion on his mind that God had commanded this. **In a case of this nature-where such a sacrifice was required-how natural would it have been for a more feeble faith to have doubted whether the command came from God! It might have been suggested to such a mind that this must be a delusion, or a temptation of Satan; that God could not require such a thing; and that whatever might be the appearance of a Divine command in the cases there must be some deception about it. Yet Abraham does not appear to have reasoned about it at all, or to have allowed the strong feelings of a father to come in to modify his conviction that God had commanded him to give up his son.**

**What an example is this to us!** And how ready should we be to yield up a son-an only son-when God comes himself and removes him from us.

(2.) **The strength of his faith was seen in the fact that, in obedience to the simple command of God, all the strong feelings of a father were overcome.** On the one hand, there were his warm affections for an only son; and on the other, there was the simple command of God. They came in collisions but Abraham did not hesitate a moment. The strong paternal feeling was sacrificed at once. What an example this, too, for us! **When the command of God and our own attachments come into collision, we should not hesitate a moment. God is to be obeyed. His command and arrangements are to be yielded to, though most tender ties are rent asunder, and though the heart bleeds.**

(3.) The strength of his faith was seen in the fact that, in obedience to the command of God, he resolved to do what in the eyes of the world would be regarded as a most awful crime. There is no crime of a higher grade than the murder of a son by the hand of a father. So it is now estimated by the world, and so it would have been in the time of Abraham. All the laws of God and of society appeared to be against the act which Abraham was about to commit, and he went forth not ignorant of the estimate which the world would put on this deed if it were known.

How natural, in such circumstances, would it have been to argue, that God *could not* possibly give such a command; that it was against all the laws of heaven and earth; that there was required in this what God and man alike must and would pronounce to be wrong and abominable! Yet Abraham did not hesitate. **The command of God in the case was, to his mind, a sufficient proof that this was right; and it should teach us that whatever our Maker commands us should be done-no matter what may be the estimate affixed to it by human laws, and no matter how it may be regarded by the world.**

(4.) The strength of his faith was seen in the fact, that there was a positive promise of God to himself which would seem to be frustrated by what he was about to do. God had expressly promised to him a numerous posterity, and had said that it was to be through this son. How could this be if he was put to death as a sacrifice? And how *could* God command such a thing when his promise was thus positive? *Yet Abraham did not hesitate. It was not for him to reconcile these things; it was his to obey. He did not doubt that somehow all that God had said would prove to be true;* and as he saw but one way in which it could be done-by his being immediately restored to life-he concluded that that was to be the way. So when God utters his will to us, it is ours simply to obey. It is not to inquire in what way his commands or revealed truth can be reconciled with other things. He will himself take care of that. It is ours at once to yield to what he commands, and to believe that somehow all that he has required and said will be consistent with everything else which he has uttered.

(5.) **The strength of the faith of Abraham was seen in his belief that God would raise his son from the dead.** Of that he had no doubt. But what evidence had he of that? It had not been promised. No case of the kind had ever occurred; and the subject was attended with all the difficulties which attend it now. But Abraham believed it; for, first, there was no other way in which the promise of God could be fulfilled; and, second, such a thing would be no more remarkable than what had already occurred. It was as easy for God to raise him from the dead as it was to give him at first, contrary to all the probabilities of the case—and he did not, therefore, doubt that it would be so. Is it less easy for us to believe the doctrine of the resurrection than it was for Abraham? Is the subject attended with more difficulties now than it was then? The faith of Abraham, in this remarkable instance, shows us that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, notwithstanding the limited revelations then enjoyed, and all the obvious difficulties of the case, was early believed in the world; and as those difficulties are no greater now, and as new light has been shed upon it by subsequent revelations, and especially as, in more than one instance, the dead have been actually raised, those difficulties should not be allowed to make us doubt it, now.

**Verse 20.** *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.* See [Genesis 27:26-40](#). **The meaning is, that he pronounced a blessing on them in respect to their future condition.** This was by faith in God, who had communicated it to him, and in full confidence that he would accomplish all that was here predicted. **The act of faith here was simply that which believes that all that God says is true.** There were no human probabilities at the time when these prophetic announcements were made, which could have been the basis of his calculation; but all that he said must have rested merely on the belief that God had revealed it to him. A blessing was pronounced on each, of a very different nature, but Isaac had no doubt that both would be fulfilled.

(\*) "Isaac blessed" [Genesis 27:27-40](#)

**Verse 21.** *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying.* [Genesis 47:31](#) [Genesis 48:1-20](#). *That is, when he was about to die.* He saw his death near when he pronounced this blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph.

*And worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.* **This is an exact quotation**

**from the Septuagint in Genesis 47:31.** The English version of that place is, "and Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head," which is a proper translation, in the main, of the word מִטָּה—*mitteh*. That word, however, with different points—מַטֵּה—*matteh*, means, a branch, a bough, a rod, a staff, and the translators of the Septuagint have so rendered it. The Masoretic points are of no authority, and either translation, therefore, would be proper. The word rendered "head" in [Genesis 47:31](#)—"bed's head"—רֹאשׁ—*rosh*, means, properly, head, but may there mean the top of anything, and there is no impropriety in applying it to the head or top of a staff. The word rendered in [Genesis 47:31](#), *bowed*—נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה—implies, properly, the idea of worshipping. It is bowing, or prostration for the purpose of worship or homage. Though the Septuagint and the apostle here have, therefore, given a somewhat different version from that commonly given of the Hebrew, and sustained by the Masoretic pointing, yet it cannot be demonstrated that the version is unauthorized, or that it is not a fair translation of the Hebrew. It has also the probabilities of the case in its favour. Jacob was tenderly affected in view of the goodness of God, and of the assurance that he would be conveyed from Egypt when he died, and buried in the land of his fathers. Deeply impressed with this, nothing was more natural than that the old man should lean reverently forward, and incline his head upon the top of his staff, and adore the covenant faithfulness of his God. Such an image is much more natural and probable than that he should "bow upon his bed's head"—a phrase which at best is not very intelligible. If this be the true account, then the apostle does not refer here to what was done when he "blessed the sons of Joseph," but to an act expressive of strong faith in God which had occurred just before. **The meaning then is, "By faith when about to die he blessed the sons of Joseph; and by faith also, he reverently bowed before God in the belief that when he died his remains would be conveyed to the promised land, and expressed his gratitude in an act of worship, leaning reverently on the top of his staff."** The order in which these things are mentioned is of no consequence, and thus the whole difficulty in the case vanishes. *Both* the acts here referred to were expressive of strong confidence in God.

(\*) "both" [Genesis 48:5-20](#)

(\*) "leaning" [Genesis 47:31](#)

**Verse 22.** *By faith Joseph, when he died.* When about to die. See [Genesis 50:24,25](#).

*Made mention of the departing of the children of Israel.* Marg. "remembered." The meaning is, that he called this to their mind; he spake of it.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." **This prediction of Joseph could have rested only on faith in the promise of God.** There were no events then occurring which would be likely to lead to this, and nothing which could be a basis of calculation that it would be so, except what God had spoken. The faith of Joseph, then, was simple confidence in God; and its strength was seen in his firm conviction that what had been promised would be fulfilled, even when there were no appearances that, to human view, justified it.

And gave commandment concerning his bones. [Genesis 50:25,26](#). And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel; saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." **He had such a firm belief that they would possess the land of promise, that he exacted an oath of them that they would remove his remains with them, that he might be buried in the land of his fathers.** He could not have exacted this oath, nor could they have taken it, unless both he and they had a sure confidence that what God had spoken would be performed.

(\*) "Joseph" [Genesis 50:24,25](#)

(\*) "made mention" "remembered"

- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

**11:8-9** God called **Abraham** to leave Haran and go to Canaan ([Gen. 12:1-4](#)). **obeyed**. Faith leads to obedience to God's promise and calling. ***inheritance***. **Also used of Christian salvation (Heb. 9:15)**. **not knowing where he was going**. See [11:1](#). **land of promise**. See [Gen. 15:18-21](#). On God's promises, see [Heb. 6:12-15](#). **foreign land**. See [11:13-16](#).

**11:10** Abraham is portrayed as yearning for the heavenly **city** (developed further in [vv. 13-16; 12:22-24; 13:13-14](#)).

**11:11-12 Sarah**. See [Gen. 21:1-7](#). That Sarah laughed, apparently in unbelief ([Gen. 18:9-15](#)), is potentially problematic for her role as an example of faith; however: (1) the author is happy to speak of the true faith of Sarah despite her failings, and (2) Sarah apparently later had a change



of heart, as her laughter became a genuine expression of joy at the birth of Isaac ([Gen. 21:6](#)), whose name means “laughter.” **received power to conceive** (lit., “power for the foundation of seed”). Although some translations give Abraham as the subject, it is best to take “Sarah” as the subject here (as the ESV does), because (1) both Sarah’s name and “herself” (Gk. *autē*) are in the nominative case (indicating the subject of the sentence), and because (2) making Abraham the subject requires either an unusual grammatical understanding of the words for “Sarah herself” or an assumption that an early copyist made an error in transcribing those two words. **considered him faithful**. See [Heb. 10:23](#). **stars... sand**. An allusion to [Gen. 22:17](#).

**11:13 died in faith**. They were faithful even unto death. **not having received**. Abraham and Sarah especially exemplify this: called to a Promised Land and promised innumerable offspring, they merely embraced these promises while living nomadically in a land not wholly theirs, where they had just one son together. **strangers and exiles on the earth**. See especially [Gen. 23:4](#); also [Ex. 2:22](#); [Lev. 25:23](#). This physical reality for the descendants of Abraham was applied spiritually in the Psalms; see [Ps. 39:12](#); [119:19](#) (also [1 Chron. 29:15](#); cf. [1 Pet. 1:1](#); [2:11](#)).

**11:14-16** The author says that the people he has mentioned in [vv. 1-13](#) were seeking a **better (heavenly) country**, which would be their true **hometown**. First, if Abraham (for example) were looking for an earthly “hometown” (Gk. *patris* refers to a place of one’s fathers), he could have returned to Haran; but he persisted in following God’s leading and focusing on his promise ([v. 15](#)). Second, the Psalms’ spiritual application of exile terminology to this whole mortal life indicates the expectation of a life to come ([Ps. 39:12](#); [119:19](#); cf. [Heb. 11:13-14](#)). **prepared for them a city**. See [v. 10](#); [12:22-24](#); [13:13-14](#).

**11:17-19 Abraham, when he was tested** (see [Gen. 22:1-19](#)). The Greek for “tested” (*peirazō*) appears also in [Gen. 22:1](#) (LXX). The word occurs elsewhere in Hebrews, though with a focus on temptation to sin; see [Heb. 2:18](#); [4:15](#) (cf. [James 1:2-4](#), [12-15](#); [1 Pet. 1:6-7](#); [4:12-14](#)). **only son**. Greek *monogenēs*; cf. [Gen. 22:2](#), [12](#) (where it reads “your only son” in Hb., but “your beloved son” in the LXX). Although Abraham also had Ishmael ([Gen. 16:4](#), [11-16](#)) and other children ([Gen. 25:1-2](#)), **this word designates Isaac as Abraham’s unique son, the son who is “one of a kind,” his only heir and the only recipient of covenant promises (Gen. 21:12; 22:15-18; 25:5).**

**raise him from the dead**. Abraham expressed confidence that he would return with Isaac ([Gen. 22:5](#); cf. [v. 8](#)). Hebrews makes a figurative analogy between resurrection and Isaac being saved from the sacrificial knife. Some interpreters perceive here an Isaac-Christ typology such as was common in the post-apostolic church fathers: as Isaac, Abraham’s only son, was offered in sacrifice and “raised,” so Jesus, God’s only Son, is sacrificed and raised. Others doubt that such typology is intended here (see note on [Gen. 22:16-17](#)).

**11:20 Isaac**. See [Gen. 27:1-45](#). **These predictive future blessings (esp. Gen. 27:28-29, 39-40) demonstrate Isaac’s hope for the future.**

**11:21** **Jacob.** See [Gen. 48:8-22](#). **Similar to Isaac, Jacob's future hope (predicated on God's promises; see Gen. 48:3-6) is evident in his blessing of his sons (Gen. 49:1-27)** and especially in his blessing of the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh, [Gen. 48:8-22](#)).

**11:22** **Joseph.** Joseph's future hope is his confidence that God will redeem his people through the exodus and lead them to the Promised Land, thus allowing Joseph's own **bones** to be moved to that land ([Gen. 50:24-25](#)).

- ESV Study Bible

**11:1-40** **This chapter compares the faith of the OT fathers with the faith exercised by Christian believers.** Faith is defined as **the reality of what is hoped for and the proof of what is not seen.** The Greek word for "reality" is *hypostasis*. It has been used previously to describe the relationship of Christ to God ([1:3](#)) and the firm confidence that believers possess ([3:14](#)). Faith is not fleeting but substantial enough to generate confidence.

The Greek word for "proof" is *elegchos*, indicating an inner conviction that is not based on visible matters.

Divine approval is the primary consequence of faith. Other results of faith are the declaration of righteousness, the ability to look forward to the heavenly city of God, the ability to understand that **faith is possible only because God is faithful**, the ability to accomplish great things in the world, and the ability to see that even when believers are persecuted and murdered, beyond this world is a better resurrection.

Throughout the chapter, the author provided examples of people in the OT who exercised faith. He focused most heavily on **Abraham** and **Moses**. To complete the list with a crescendo, he recounted an inspiring litany of the fruit of faith displayed in the virtuous life, faithful death, and anticipated resurrection of numerous OT heroes. However, although their faith was **approved**, they did not receive what God had **promised**. The purpose of this delay was to ensure that they would not be perfected apart from Jesus Christ.

pistis

**Greek Pronunciation** [PIS tis]

**HCSB Translation** Faith

Uses in Hebrews	32 (24 in <a href="#">Heb 11</a> )
Uses in the NT	243
Focus passage	<a href="#">Hebrews 11:6</a>

*Pistis* carries a spectrum of meanings in the NT. It can refer to something completely *trustworthy*. Christ's resurrection is the *proof* (i.e., *trustworthy evidence*) that God will one day judge the world ([Ac 17:31](#)). *Pistis* may also refer to a *solemn promise* ([1Tim 5:12](#)). It sometimes means the state of *being faithful* or *trustworthy*. God's *faithfulness* ensures He will fulfill His promises ([Rm 3:3](#)). *Pistis* may express belief with complete *trust*. **The NT refers to the *faith* of OT characters ([Rm 4:9,11-13,16](#); [Heb 11:4-33,39](#)) and of Christians ([Heb 6:1](#); [10:39](#)). In the Gospels, *faith* is often expressed as reliance on the Lord's power over nature, illness, and spiritual powers ([Mt 8:10](#); [Mk 2:5](#); [Lk 8:25](#)).**

***Christian piety involves faith accompanied by works*** ([Jms 2:14,17](#), etc.).

Finally, *pistis* may refer to the doctrine one believes. Christians should contend for the *faith* (i.e., the body of apostolic doctrine) delivered to them ([Jd 3,20](#)).

## Salvation in the Old Testament

*Paige Patterson*

The concept of salvation in the Old Testament (OT) features a variety of applications, including deliverance, rescue, safety, and even welfare. In [Exodus 14:30](#), Yahweh "saved" Israel from the hand of the Egyptians. This usage of the term is typical of the times when salvation focuses on physical deliverance from a specific danger. Another nuance involves forensic or legal rescue, which is observed in passages like [Deuteronomy 22:27](#) where a woman who is the subject of sexual attack in a field has no one to rescue her. But the most significant use of the concept and the one most commonly perceived is the soteriological emphasis in which the fallen spiritual nature of humankind stands in need of salvation or redemption by God.

Implicit in all uses of "salvation" are the perceptions of need and even inability. As often as not, God is featured as the only One who can effect a rescue or bring salvation, which is especially true of the eternal salvation of the individual. Passages such as [Isaiah 51:8](#) contrast the ephemeral nature of physical realities with a salvation that is for all generations. In the famous passage magnifying the beauty of those who bring good news and proclaim salvation, the rescue in view seems to be spiritual and eternal ([Isa 52:7](#)). [Isaiah 59:17](#) employs language later invoked by New Testament authors such as Paul, who speaks of "righteousness like armor on your chest" and "the helmet of salvation" ([Eph 6:14,17](#)). In Jonah's prayer from the belly of the great fish, he declares that "salvation is from the LORD!" ([Jnh 2:9](#)). While it could be argued that the prophet's thought is only about his abysmal physical circumstance, most would see a more profound avowal, anticipating God's sovereign redemption of the soul.

Salvation in the OT is also linked with other concepts such as redemption, atonement, and righteousness. Such ideas express the means of salvation (atonement), the goal of salvation (righteousness), or the nature of salvation (redemption). For example, the Passover was designed not only to depict the exodus from Egypt but also to remind the Israelites of the more profound significance of the role of sacrifice in salvation. A lamb dies and its blood is sprinkled on the doorposts so that the death angel will pass over, sparing the life of the firstborn ([Ex 12:1-14](#)). The rituals associated with the Day of Atonement also focused on a vicarious, substitutionary atonement for the sins of the people ([Lv 16:1-34](#)).

[Isaiah 53](#) conveys the message of a sacrificial act on the part of the Suffering Servant, who made His life an offering for sin that would "justify many" ([v. 11](#)). By His stripes we are healed and the iniquity of us all was laid on Him as He was struck by God for the transgressions of us all.

God is the sole author of salvation. The human family, horribly marred by sin, cannot effect salvation even by the keeping of the law. This raises the question of how salvation is appropriated in the OT. [Genesis 15:6](#) declares that "Abram believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness." Paul makes this passage central to his whole argument in [Romans 1-8](#). "For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness" ([Rm 4:3](#)).

While there seems to be general recognition among Christians that righteousness and holiness are required to stand before God, many erroneously believe that salvation was attained in the OT by the keeping of the law. Both Genesis and Romans agree in declaring that salvation may be attained only through faith (believing God). As the sacrificial system perpetually illustrated, atonement must be made. [Isaiah 53](#) presented the Suffering Servant as the One who would ultimately make that atonement. Paul demonstrates explicitly what is always implicit in the OT—the law could save no one. Salvation is extended in any era on the basis of God's grace appropriated by the faith of human beings.

**11:8-10 Abraham's faith regarding the promise of a homeland was demonstrated: (a) when he obeyed God's voice, leaving Ur for a future inheritance, the location of which he did not know ([v. 8](#)); (b) when he lived as a stranger in the land promised to him ([vv. 9, 13](#)); and (c) when he looked beyond Canaan to a lasting, heavenly country and city, designed and built by God Himself ([vv. 10, 14-16; 13:14](#)).**

**11:11, 12** Abraham's faith regarding the promise of descendants was rewarded with the conception of Isaac, which was miraculous, since Sarah was barren and Abraham was (with respect to the possibility of reproduction) "as good as dead" ([Rom. 4:19](#)). Despite misguided alternatives ([Gen. 16:1-4](#)) and questioning doubts ([Gen. 17:17, 18](#)), in the end Abraham and Sarah "considered him faithful who had promised" ([v. 11](#)).

**11:13-16 The inheritance on which the patriarchs' faith was fixed was invisible for two reasons: it was heavenly, not earthly; and future, not present.** See notes on [vv. 8-10, 20, 21, 22](#).

**11:13 having seen them ... afar. *Abraham saw from afar the day that Jesus the Messiah would come, and rejoiced ([John 8:56](#)).***

strangers and exiles on the earth. **All the heirs of salvation are homeless refugees on the earth ([v. 38](#))** because, until Christ's return, we are in exile from the home we are waiting to inherit ([1 Pet. 1:1, 4, 5, 17; 2:11](#)).

**11:16 a better country.** The Old Testament believers themselves realized that the hope and promises to which they looked forward in faith were heavenly, and not merely physical.

**11:17-19 The ultimate test of Abraham's faith was the sacrifice of Isaac.**

Isaac was the "only son" (cf. [John 3:16](#)) so far as the promises were concerned ([v. 19](#))—neither Abraham's servant Eliezer ([Gen. 15:2](#)) nor his other son Ishmael ([Gen. 17:20, 21](#)) would do. ***If Isaac were to perish without offspring, the promises of God would fail.*** Abraham's readiness to slay the son of promise at God's command could arise from nothing less than the conviction that "God was able even to raise ... the dead" ([v. 19](#)). Isaac's "resurrection" was only figurative, but believers who have died for their faith look forward to a literal resurrection (cf. [v. 35](#)), in which Jesus has led the way ([13:20](#)).

**11:20 future blessings.** That Jacob would possess a fruitful land, and have dominion over nations, including the descendants of Esau ([Gen. 27:27-29](#)).

**11:21 In his blessing, Jacob foresaw that the descendants of Joseph's younger son would surpass those of Joseph's older son, in numbers and influence ([Gen. 48:13-20](#)).** Jacob himself was a younger brother who had been elevated over an older one.

**11:22 Joseph remembered the promise of the Exodus that had first been spoken to Abraham long before Isaac's birth ([Gen. 15:13, 14](#)) and that would await fulfillment through four more centuries of oppression. Joseph's instructions to take his bones to the Promised Land expressed faith in things not yet seen ([Ex. 13:19](#)).**

- The Reformation Study Bible.

**11:13 Some ask, "How can OT persons be saved since they never exercised explicit faith in Christ?" This verse provides the answer. Saints in the OT looked forward to the messianic hope and believed in God's promises, which pointed to the future Messiah, Jesus.**

[11:17](#) Some see a contradiction in this verse because they argue it says that Abraham had only one son, Isaac, when it is known from other passages ([Gn 16:15](#); [Gl 4:22](#)) that he also had a son named Ishmael. This verse can be explained by remembering that Isaac was the promised son on whom the fulfillment of God's pledge of numerous descendants to Abraham depended ([Gn 15:1-6](#); [22:15-18](#)). Thus, in this sense, Ishmael did not count. This conclusion is further borne out by [Heb 11:18](#): "In Isaac your seed will be called" (see [Gn 21:12](#)).

## The Apologetics Study Bible

[11:8-10](#) Abraham's life was filled with faith. At God's command, he left home and went to another land—obeying without question ([Genesis 12:1ff](#)). He believed the covenant that God made with him ([Genesis 12:2, 3](#); [13:14-16](#); [15:1-6](#)). In obedience to God, Abraham was even willing to sacrifice his son Isaac ([Genesis 22:1-19](#)). **Do not be surprised if God asks you to give up secure, familiar surroundings in order to carry out his will.** For further information on Abraham, see his Profile in [Genesis 18](#), p. 33.

[11:11, 12](#) Sarah was Abraham's wife. They were unable to have children through many years of their marriage. God promised Abraham a son, but Sarah doubted that she could become pregnant in her old age. At first she laughed, but afterward, she believed ([Genesis 18](#)). For more information on Sarah, see her Profile in [Genesis 19](#), p. 35.

[11:13](#) That we are "foreigners and nomads" on earth may be an awareness forced on us by circumstances. It may come late in life or as the result of difficult times. But this world is not our home.

***We cannot live here forever (see also [1 Peter 1:1](#)).***  
***It is best for us not to be so attached to this world's***  
***desires and possessions that we can't move out***  
***at God's command.***

[11:13-16](#) These people of faith died without receiving all that God had promised, but they never lost their vision of heaven ("a better place, a heavenly homeland"). Many Christians become frustrated and defeated because their needs, wants, expectations, and demands are not immediately met when they accept Christ as Savior. They become impatient and want to quit. **Are you discouraged because the achievement of your goal seems far away? Take courage from these heroes of faith, who lived and died without seeing the fruit of their faith on earth and yet continued to believe** (see [11:36-39](#)).

[11:17-19](#) Abraham was willing to give up his son when God commanded him to do so ([Genesis 22:1-19](#)).

***God did not let Abraham take Isaac's life, because God had given the command in order to test Abraham's faith. Instead of taking Abraham's son, God gave Abraham a whole nation of descendants through Isaac. If you are afraid to trust God with the possession, dream, or person you treasure most, pay attention to Abraham's example. Because Abraham was willing to give up everything for God, he received back more than he could have imagined. What we receive, however, is not always immediate or in the form of material possessions. Material things should be among the least satisfying of rewards. Our best and greatest rewards await us in eternity.***

[11:20](#) Isaac was the son who had been promised to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. **It was through Isaac that God fulfilled his promise to eventually give Abraham countless descendants. Isaac had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. God chose the younger son, Jacob, through whom to continue the fulfillment of his promise to Abraham.** For more information on Isaac, see his Profile in [Genesis 19](#), p. 37.

[11:21](#) Jacob was Isaac's son and Abraham's grandson. **Jacob's sons became the fathers of Israel's 12 tribes. Even when Jacob (also called "Israel") was dying in a strange land, he believed the promise that Abraham's descendants would be like the sand on the seashore and that Israel would become a great nation (Genesis 48:1-22).**

***True faith helps us see beyond the grave.***

For more information on Jacob and Esau, see their Profiles in [Genesis 25](#), pp. 47 and 49.

[11:22](#) Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers ([Genesis 37](#)). Eventually, Joseph was sold again, this time to an official of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Because of Joseph's faithfulness to God, however, he was given a top-ranking position in Egypt. Although Joseph could have used that position to build a personal empire, he remembered God's promise to Abraham.



After Joseph had been reconciled to his brothers, he brought his family to be near him and requested that his bones be taken to the Promised Land when the Jews eventually left Egypt ([Genesis 50:24, 25](#)). **Faith means trusting in God and doing what he wants, regardless of the circumstances or consequences.** For more information on Joseph, see his Profile in [Genesis 37, p. 71](#).

**Life Application Study Bible.**

## *By Abraham and His Descendants ([11:8-19](#))*

We are often called to leave worldly connexions, interests, and comforts. If heirs of Abraham's faith, we shall obey and go forth, though not knowing what may befall us; and we shall be found in the way of duty, looking for the performance of God's promises. **The trial of Abraham's faith was, that he simply and fully obeyed the call of God.** Sarah received the promise as the promise of God; being convinced of that, she truly judged that he both could and would perform it. Many, who have a part in the promises, do not soon receive the things promised. Faith can lay hold of blessings at a great distance; can make them present; can love them and rejoice in them, though strangers; as saints, whose home is heaven; as pilgrims, travelling toward their home. *By faith, they overcome the terrors of death, and bid a cheerful farewell to this world, and to all the comforts and crosses of it. And those once truly and savingly called out of a sinful state, have no mind to return into it.*

*All true believers desire the heavenly inheritance; and the stronger faith is, the more fervent those desires will be.*

*Notwithstanding their meanness by nature, their vileness by sin, and the poverty of their outward condition, God is not ashamed to be called the God of all true believers; such is his mercy, such is his love to them. Let them never be ashamed of being called his people...*

*...nor of any of those who are truly so, how much so-ever despised in the world. Above all, let them take care that they are not a shame and reproach to their God.*

The greatest trial and act of faith upon record is, Abraham's offering up Isaac, [Gen 22:2](#). There, every word shows a trial.

*It is our duty to reason down our doubts and fears, by looking, as Abraham did, to the Almighty power of God.*

*The best way to enjoy our comforts is,  
to give them up to God...*

...He will then again give them as shall be the best for us. Let us look how far our faith has caused the like obedience, when we have been called to lesser acts of self-denial, or to make smaller sacrifices to our duty. Have we given up what was called for, fully believing that the Lord would make up all our losses, and even bless us by the most afflicting dispensations?

- **Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary.**

***The patriarchs—faith waiting ([vv. 8-22](#)).***

The emphasis in this section is on the promise of God and His plans for the nation of Israel ([Heb. 11:9, 11, 13, 17](#)). The nation began with the call of Abraham. **God promised Abraham and Sarah a son, but they had to wait twenty-five years for the fulfillment of the promise.** Their son Isaac became the father of Jacob and Esau, and it was Jacob who really built the nation through the birth of his twelve sons. Joseph saved the nation *in* the land of Egypt, and Moses would later deliver them *from* Egypt.

*Waiting is, for me, one of the most difficult disciplines of life. Yet true faith is able to wait for the fulfillment of God's purposes in God's time. **But, while we are waiting, we must also be obeying.***

*"By faith Abraham ... obeyed" ([Heb. 11:8](#)).*

He obeyed when *he did not know where he was going* ([Heb. 11:8-10](#)). He lived in tents because he was a stranger and pilgrim in the world and had to be ready to move whenever God spoke.

**Christians today are also strangers and pilgrims ([1 Peter 1:1](#); [2:11](#)).**

Abraham had his eyes on the heavenly city and lived "in the future tense."

He also obeyed when *he did not know how*

*God's will would be accomplished* ([Heb. 11:11-12](#)). Both Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children. Yet they both believed that God would do the miracle ([Rom. 4:13-25](#)).

Unbelief asks, "How *can* this be?" ([Luke 1:18-20](#))

Faith asks, "How *shall* this be?" ([Luke 1:34-37](#))

Abraham believed and obeyed God when *he did not know when God would fulfill His promises* ([Heb. 11:13-16](#)). None of the patriarchs saw the complete fulfillment of God's promises, but they saw from "afar off" what God was doing.

**Dr. George Morrison**, a great Scottish preacher, once said:

*"The important thing is not what we live in, but what we look for."*

*These men and women of faith lived in tents, but they knew a heavenly city awaited them. God always fulfills His promises to His believing people, either immediately or ultimately.*

Finally, Abraham obeyed God by faith when *he did not know why God was so working* ([Heb. 11:17-19](#)). Why would God want Abraham to sacrifice his son when it was the Lord who gave him that son? All of a future nation's promises were wrapped up in Isaac. **The tests of faith become more difficult as we walk with God, yet the rewards are more wonderful! And we must not ignore the obedient faith of Isaac.**

**In Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, we have four generations of faith. These men sometimes failed, but basically they were men of faith.** They were not perfect, but they were devoted to God and trusted His Word. Isaac passed the promises and the blessings along to Jacob ([Gen. 27](#)), and Jacob shared them with his twelve sons ([Gen. 48-49](#)). Jacob was a pilgrim, for even as he was dying he leaned on his pilgrim staff.

**The faith of Joseph was certainly remarkable. After the way his family treated him, you would think he would have abandoned his faith; but instead, it grew stronger. Even the ungodly influence of Egypt did not weaken his trust in God.** Joseph did not use his family, his job, or his circumstances as an excuse for unbelief. ***Joseph knew what he believed***—that God would one day deliver his people from Egypt ([Gen. 50:24-26](#)).

***Joseph also knew where he belonged***—in Canaan, not in Egypt; so he made them promise to carry his remains out of Egypt at the Exodus. They did! (see [Ex. 13:19](#) and [Josh. 24:32](#))

*We have to admire the faith of the patriarchs. They did not have a complete Bible, and yet their faith was strong. They handed God's promises down from one generation to another. In spite of their failures and testings, these men and women believed God and He bore witness to their faith.*

***How much more faith you and I should have!***

- Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Confident (Hebrews).

**QUOTE: A.W. Tozer**

*The truth is that every advance that we make for God and for His cause must be made at our inconvenience. If it does not inconvenience us at all, there is no cross in it! If we have been able to reduce spirituality to a smooth pattern and it costs us nothing—no disturbance, no bother and no element of sacrifice in it—we are not getting anywhere with God. We have stopped and pitched our unworthy tent halfway between the swamp and the peak.*

*We are mediocre Christians!*

*Was there ever a cross that was convenient?  
Was there ever a convenient way to die?*

## Who are the biblical patriarchs?

**Question:** *"Who are the biblical patriarchs?"*

**Answer:** The biblical patriarchs are the line of men God used to establish the nation of Israel. Perhaps the most well-known of the biblical patriarchs is Abraham, because from him all Israelites are descended. God made a covenant with him, promising that Abraham would be "the father of many nations" (Genesis 17:4). In fact, God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude."

**Abraham:** God approached Abraham (then "Abram") and promised to make his descendants a great nation (Genesis 12:2) in the land of Canaan. Following God's

instruction, Abram took his extended family to Canaan, and they lived there as nomads. Despite God's promise, Abram's wife, Sarai, remained barren. In desperation, she gave Abram her handmaiden, Hagar, as a concubine. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, thought to be the forefather of Arabs. Despite Sarah's doubts, she soon gave birth to Isaac (Genesis 21:2). In her jealousy for her son's inheritance, Sarah forced Hagar and Ishmael to the wilderness. When Sarah died, Abraham married Keturah and had six more sons, although the line of biblical patriarchy ran through Isaac.

Isaac: Isaac began as a man of great faith, trusting his father when God told Abraham to sacrifice him (Genesis 22) and trusting his father's servant to choose Rebekah as a wife for him (Genesis 24). When his wife was pregnant with twins, however, and was told the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob), Isaac rebelled and attempted to favor the older anyway. But God's plan was for Jacob to be next in the line of patriarchs, which is exactly what happened.

Jacob: When Rebekah realized she was pregnant with twins, God told her the older would serve the younger (Genesis 25:23). Jacob was barely younger, as he came out holding his brother Esau's heel. Esau went on to marry, giving Isaac and Rebekah grief (Genesis 26:35) and became the father the Edomites (Genesis 36:9), who gave the nation of Israel grief. Jacob knew of the prophecy given to Rebekah, but didn't trust God to fulfill it in His time. With prompting from Rebekah, Jacob (whose name means "supplanter") tricked Isaac out of the inheritance of the firstborn (Genesis 27) and then promptly ran away to Rebekah's brother, Laban. When Jacob fell in love with Laban's younger daughter, Rachel, Laban proved to be a match for his nephew and had him work for seven years, then married him to his older daughter, Leah. Jacob had to work another seven years for Rachel. Because Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, God comforted Leah by allowing her to conceive and bear sons.

Rachel gave her handmaiden to Jacob, resulting in more sons. Leah countered with her handmaiden, Rachel finally got pregnant, and Jacob wound up with twelve sons and a daughter. Before reconciling with Esau, Jacob wrestled with the pre-incarnate Christ, who changed his name to Israel ("he who strives with God"; Genesis 32:24-28). The nation took the name, Israel, from the man who fathered the nation.

Jacob's sons: Each of Jacob's sons became the patriarch of a tribe of Israel. As Jacob lay dying, he blessed each son (Genesis 49), mirroring his own inheritance by placing Joseph's younger son, Ephraim, over the older Manasseh (Genesis 48:14). The sons of Jacob and the heads of the tribes of Israel were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Benjamin, and Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

**Recommended Resources:** [Bible Answers for Almost all Your Questions by Elmer Towns](#)

# When Did Each of the Biblical Patriarchs Live and Die?

APRIL 29, 2016 | [Justin Taylor](#)

## SHARE

When I first started working on the *ESV Study Bible*, ten years ago, one of the most enjoyable projects was trying my hand at some charts that would summarize the ages and timelines of various figures. If you are reading through the Bible on your own, this information can be difficult to track as it is not presented systematically. For example, we learn in [Exodus 7:7](#) that Moses is 80 years old when he returns to Egypt to confront Pharaoh. (We also learn in that verse that Aaron is three years older than his brother Moses.) And at the end of the Pentateuch we learn that Moses is 120 years old when he dies ([Deut. 34:7](#)). But it's not until [Acts 7:23](#) that we learn that Moses was 40 years old when he fled Egypt for the first time.

So when we put all the data together, a simple [chart](#) emerges:

### Three Stages of Moses' Life

Location	Age	Reference
Egypt	0–40	<a href="#">Ex. 2:11</a> ; <a href="#">Acts 7:23</a>
Midian	41–80	<a href="#">Ex. 2:15</a> ; <a href="#">7:7</a> ; <a href="#">Acts 7:29–30</a>
The wilderness	81–120	<a href="#">Deut. 31:2</a> ; <a href="#">34:7</a> ; cf. <a href="#">Num. 14:33–34</a> ; <a href="#">Deut. 29:5</a>

Lately I've tried to do something similar with the Patriarchs and some of their key descendants prior to the time of Moses. It's interesting to me not only for seeing the age in which someone died (say, Abraham at the age of 175), but how old his sons and grandsons were when he died (Isaac was 75 and Jacob was 15). The Bible does not explicitly say those latter ages, but they can be deduced mathematically (e.g., Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born, so if Abraham died at 175 then Isaac would have been 75). Does any of this matter much when we read through the Old Testament narratives? Probably not. But it helps me, at least, to remember that these are real people (not just stories) and to picture them at various stages of their lives. It also reminds me of the compressed nature of these narratives, as the story can often times skip decades ahead from one verse to the next.

In the chart below, I added something in the far-right column that might only make sense to someone who has a weird brain like mine. I noticed that the time period from Abraham to Joseph was 361 years

(2166-1805). That's a good chunk of time. What if we were to make each year roughly equivalent to a calendar day in a single year. So if Abraham was born in year 1, that would be January 1.

In other words, if the Patriarchal period was compressed to the timeline of a year, then Abraham would be born on January 1, Isaac would be born on April 9, Jacob would be born on June 8, and Joseph would be born on September 18. Abraham would die on June 23, Isaac would die on October 6, Jacob would die on November 19, and Joseph would die on December 26.

If that part makes sense only to me, so be it. You can ignore that column on the chart.

## Being A Part Of The Family Of God

[John 1:12](#) ESV / 192 helpful votes

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

[1 John 3:1-2](#) ESV / 159 helpful votes

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

[Ephesians 2:19-22](#) ESV / 151 helpful votes

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

[Galatians 6:10](#) ESV / 120 helpful votes

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.



[1 Corinthians 12:26](#) ESV / 82 helpful votes

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

[Romans 12:5](#) ESV / 79 helpful votes

So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

[1 Corinthians 3:9](#) ESV / 50 helpful votes

For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

[John 1:12-13](#) ESV / 50 helpful votes

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

[1 Timothy 3:15](#) ESV / 48 helpful votes

If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

[Ephesians 2:19](#) ESV / 41 helpful votes

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

[John 13:34](#) ESV / 41 helpful votes

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

[Ephesians 1:5](#) ESV / 37 helpful votes

He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

[1 Timothy 5:1-25](#) ESV / 33 helpful votes

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, ...

[John 3:16](#) ESV / 33 helpful votes

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[Ephesians 6:4](#) ESV / 32 helpful votes

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[John 14:6](#) ESV / 32 helpful votes

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

[Hebrews 2:11](#) ESV / 31 helpful votes

For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,

[Philippians 4:13](#) ESV / 30 helpful votes

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

[Joshua 24:15](#) ESV / 30 helpful votes [Helpful](#) [Not Helpful](#)

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

## Romans 15:5-6

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ

Jesus, 6 that **together** (HOM-OTH-OO-MA-DON)

you may with one voice glorify the God and Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **POWERFUL “DNA” QUOTE:**

To fail to exclude unbelievers from the fellowship of the church is a grave error. Only disunity and dissension can result when those who serve Christ try to work in harmony with those who serve Satan.




Additionally, to design the activities of the church to appeal to unbelievers, or to allow them to play a major role in the life of the church, is to give them a false sense of security. The result for them may be eternal tragedy. The church must reach out in love to those who do not know Christ. It must never, however, let them feel that they are a part of the fellowship until they come to faith in Christ.

...And no evangelistic purpose should ever be undertaken that alters what the church is by divine design—**an assembly of saved worshipers pursuing holiness and spiritual service.**

\*\*\* See Mark Dever's message:

## 42 **And they devoted themselves...**

A. **“they”** =

-   New Christians
-   Spirit-filled
-   “Church”
  - - Body “parts” of whole...
  - - Swatches of the Quilt

\*\*\* Define & Defend Church...

**“synagogue of Satan” (Rev. 2:9; 3:9)**

BEWARE...

*I appeal to/urge you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; **avoid them**. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. (Rom. 16:17-18)*

**ALL Christians are to “strive to excel in building up the church” (1 Cor. 14:12)**

**“I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18).**

2. **“devoted”** = (SPIRIT empowered devotion) No superficial, wishy-washy walks or worship!

“Devoting” = “of one accord” 1:14

**QUOTE:**

*The first sign of a Spirit-filled church is one in which the Spirit-filled people do not flee from Scripture and seek a substitute for it... but rather, they are driven to Scripture to have their spiritual lives rooted and grounded in the Word of God.*

- R.C. Sproul

**Hebrews 10:24-25** charges believers to "*consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*"

**KOINONIA** = our participation in the blood and body of Christ when we partake of the cup and the bread at the Lord's Supper (**1 Cor. 10:16**).

### 3. **“themselves”** = (voluntary commitment) \*\*\* came WANTING to learn!

The BIBLICAL Christian’s Perspective on Sin...

Sin **grieves** the Holy Spirit  
Sin **dishonors** God  
Sin **hinders** prayer  
Sin makes us **spiritually powerless**

Sin **withholds God’s blessings** from us Sin **robs us of joy**

Sin **stunts spiritual growth**  
Sin is a ticking **time bomb** (Esau)  
Sin makes us **unfit for the Lord’s use**  
Sin **pollutes** Christian fellowship  
Sin **endangers** our physical lives too  
Sin **precludes** people from the Lord’s Supper

**T/S: There will NEVER be peace between these two combatants...**

Ephesians 4:30  
1 Corinthians 6:19-20 1 Peter 3:12  
1 Corinthians 9:27 Jeremiah 5:25  
Psalms 51:12  
1 Corinthians 3:1 Hebrews 12:17  
2 Timothy 2:21  
1 Corinthians 10:21  
1 John 5:16  
1 Corinthians 11:28-29

*Puritan Thomas Watson:* “The breast-plate of righteousness can (and will) be shot AT... but NEVER shot through.”

“A hypocrite may leave sin, yet love it; as a serpent casts its skin... while keeping its sting & venom. But, (by contrast), a sanctified person not only leaves sin, but hates it.”

Note: **God did not tame Goliath**, He cut his head off...

David was giant-slayer... AND... giant sinner!

David's Psalms reveal: Great love of God and Great hate of sin.

### **Charles Spurgeon:**

“Soldiers of Christ... to arms again!”

“If you are here today and say:  
I am not disturbed by such battles – then the grace of God is not in you.

If you say, I don't experience such inner conflicts: Then hear me, you are living with a false peace.

If you find that the devil is leaving you alone... It is because you are already his.

Do not you despise the Christians around you that are in the conflict. Rather, despise yourself and join them.

And if you feel no pain from all this... It is because dead men feel no pain.

**You have been warned! You have been warned!”**

**The Way:**

**24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

*“ONLY THE TRULY WRETCHED... TRULY WORSHIP.” – JDP*

\*\*\*\*\* “Who will set me free from this **BODY OF DEATH?**” \*\*\*\*\*

“Body of death” = cultural illustration... very powerful! **Carrying corpse!**

\*\*\*\*\***Carrying carnal corpse is the cost of Christian living**\*\*\*\*\*

**1 Peter 2:11** tells us that the *flesh is warring against the soul...*

*“Where the war is not fought, the soul has surrendered to the enemy.” – JDP*

*“No eagle soars as skillfully as the one thru whose feathers the winds of war have blown.” – JDP*

The war validates the faith... because the lost won't fight against sin...

Herein we have biblical “models” of the biblical definition of faith...

\*\*\* Note as we begin:

They are “biblical” vs perfect models...

They are “imperfect models” vs per Messiah

They are faithful in a fallen world

They are NOT filled with the Spirit

Picked PEOPLE

Purposed PEOPLE

Promised

Preserved/Persevering

Power-filled

Preserve & Proclaim PEOPLE

Pleasing & walking-with God PEOPLE



Populating (like grains of sand/beaches) people

Videos:

- Legacy
- Faces of Grace
- No Longer Slaves (Zach Williams in prison)

ABE, Isaac, Jake & Joe:

- All born lost...
- All chosen

Abe over all...

Isaac over Ishmael

Jacob over Esau

Joseph over Elder brother(s)

Ephraim over Manasse per Jacob dying

Jesus over a Julius Caesar

- All called
- All scoundrels

Abe gives up Sarah as his sister (TWICE)

Sarah laughs at God & goes to get Hagar...

Isaac does same with Rebekah

Jacob was a poster child for slippery sin

Joe was purest but still far from perfect...

- All sanctified progressively

Acted upon by God & His grace

Believe & repent by faith

Captured by grace

~ Called

~ Converted

~ Co-missioned

- All ultimately Worship, Win, & WITNESS

Worshipping thru faith

Walking by faith

Working in Faith

If you are consistently coming & going unchanged to & from church gatherings, something is inherently & eternally wrong with either you, the church, or both! - JDP

\*\*\* See Philipians 3:9-11... WE BE like Him!

\*\*\* The Witness of the WILLED, Weak & Warped

Want-to

Wampus/Wacky/Weirdo

Wounded

Warriors

Philippians 1:28

Use QUILT illustration

See 1 Cor. 12... we are ONE body...

Acts 2:41-47!!!

Devoted

Fellowship / Koinonia....

~ John 17:21-23

~ 2 Cor. 13:14

~ Acts 1:8

Together / Homothoomadon

~ Our worship defines our fellowship!

Manifesto!

- See the sequence...it matters!

- See Hebrews 11...

- One FAITH

- One FAMILY

\* Christ's-chosen

\* Cross-carrying

\* Corpse-carrying

\* Christ-championing

\* Church-in-Koinonia!

~~ In Holy-Homothoomadon

- One FOCUS

Hebrews 10:24-25

Hebrews 10:26-29

Hebrews 11:1-8

Add Romans & "carrying your corpse"

- The WAR-WITHIN!

- "It's Not Enough"

\*\*\* Romans 8:37... Overwhelming Overcomers!

Philippians 1:26ff

\*\*\* What defines & describes you?

\*\*\* What unites & unifies us?

\*\*\* What would others say consumes you??

DEEP Context needed to hold Hebrews together here...

NOT ASHAMED. CONNECTION <<<

<< CONNECT CONTRAST AT EACH STAGE >>

\*\*\* Fall & Faith & Following

F = v.8-9...Fallen to Faithfully-obedient Followers  
A = v.10... Acted-upon; Accept; Awaken

Awful to Awesome-overcomers  
M = v.11-12...Messed-up to Missionaries  
I = v.13-19... Infected to Infused  
L = v.20-22... Lost to Lover, Learner, Leader, Lifer  
Y = v.1-22...

Word  
Witness (of God)  
Worldview  
Worship (thru sacrifice)  
Walk (and talk mutually with God)  
Without.... (IMPOSSIBLE to please God)  
Work  
WITNESS  
~ Weak & Willed FAMILY of God

\*\*\* NOTE: this biblical FAMILY is not just God's description... it's God's DESIGN!  
- Spiritually  
- Morally  
- Structurally