

Hebrews



**Promises
Faithfully
Kept**

Hebrews 11.8-22, Pt. 1 (ESV)

They Looked Forward to Christ



Guide pic

“Good decisions come from experience, experience comes from bad decisions.”-Mark Twain

Learn from the experience of others. God commended the faith of these patriarchs in this section. The original audience would have held them in high regard, especially Abraham. These patriarchs looked forward to the promises of God would keep and fulfill. As the preacher points out, those promises kept are fulfilled ultimately in Christ.

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As you'll see with Abraham and his family, sometimes following Christ home to God includes passing through difficult sections of the journey. There will be times in which we'll only see just what is immediately ahead. It may be that we don't see anything, but we know God's reaching out and saying "Trust me, follow me."

Faith & Fear

Fear God and endure with saving faith

Don't give into the world and fear.

(Reminders: Saving faith in Christ is our starting point for approaching God, we need to read Scripture through the lens of faith for encouragement in endurance, the Old Testament saints pointed forward to Christ through their lives;

Today, the text starts to make clear that they not only prepared us for Christ but that they looked forward to Christ as God's promise kept and God's promise fulfilled.)

8 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.

9 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.

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

11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

**12 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.**

**13 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.**

**14 For people who speak thus
make it clear that they are
seeking a homeland.**

15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 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.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises

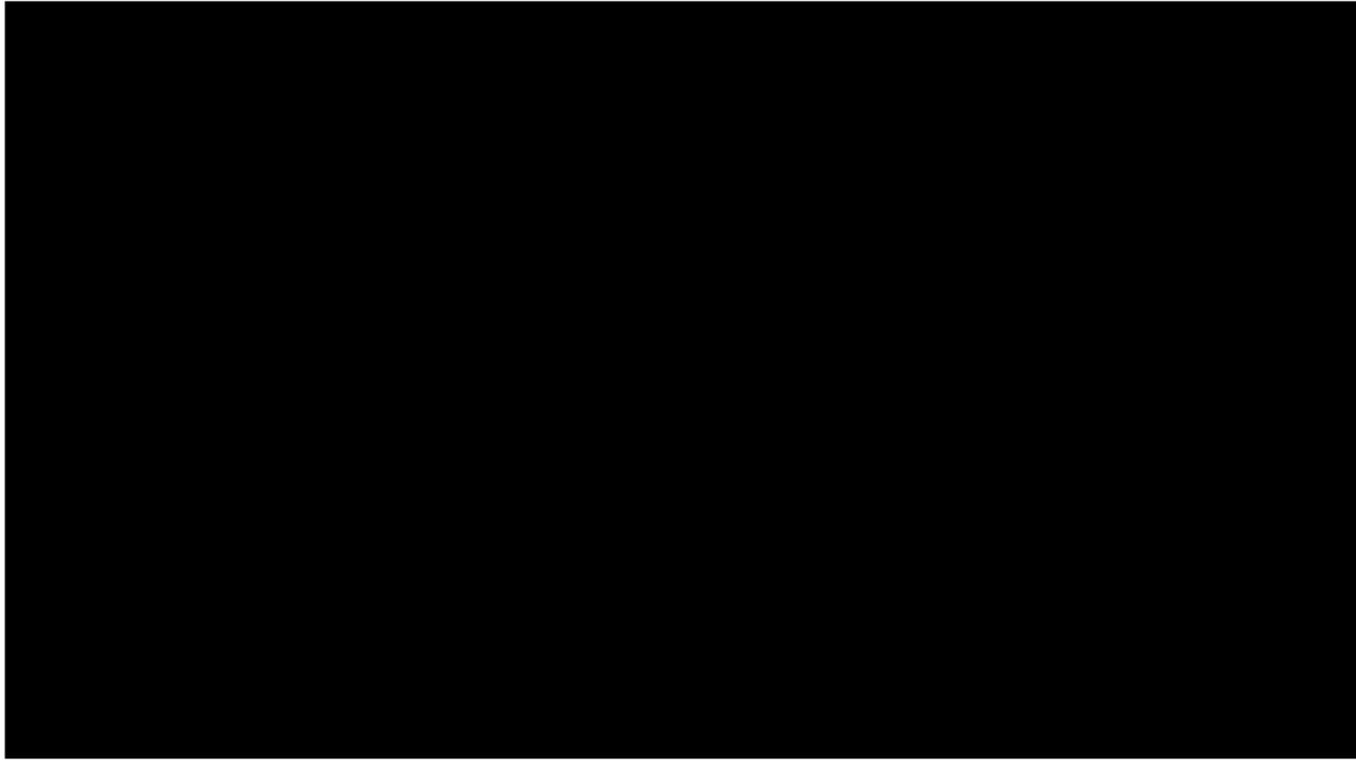
**was in the act of offering up his
only son, 18 of whom it was
said, “Through Isaac shall your
offspring be named.”**

19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

20 By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

**21 By faith Jacob, when dying,
blessed each of the sons of
Joseph, bowing in worship over
the head of his staff.**

22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.



Pray



Faith that looks back to Christ also looks forward to the final promises kept.

Looking to the past fulfillments in Christ give us confidence for the future.

Abraham had less to go on than us, but he had enough to trust and look forward to God's amazing fulfillment that would be beyond his life.

Let's learn more what such forward looking faith looks like.

Faith that looks to Christ Trusts the One who knows all the details. (v. 8)

-Faith that looks to Christ doesn't have to know all the details in order to trust. It acts on trust in the One who does know all the details.

- Explanation

- o 8 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.
- o We need to appreciate the situation Abram was in when he is introduced in Genesis 11 & 12. Without any preparation from the text, we're told that God called this man named Abram to leave everything he knows and go somewhere else that he knows either nothing about or very little about.
- o Illustrate: This week at the elders retreat we got to know some recent college graduates who are preparing to leave everything they familiar with and leave their family and friends to go to places all over the world, to places they do not know well and to be with people they have never met and who may speak a language they have not learned. Why? Because they knew God was calling them to go and they are willing to obey.
- o They are willing to go because another came before them when the Father called for Him to go to a people who would treat Him like He was foreign to them, even though He Himself is the One by Whom the Father created all things. Christ Jesus came to us because the Father sent Him, calling Him to come to this world in order that He might proclaim gospel and accomplish our salvation. He trusted the Father and obeyed.

o Abraham pointed us forward to Christ as a man who had very little introduction prior to his call forth. As we'll talk about in a little bit, Abraham was called forth in the context of man's rebellion.

After Noah it again became clear that every inclination of humanity is to rebel against God. The people explicitly cite God's commands as what they were not going to do. In that context, God called Abram from the land of Ur. He came even though it meant leaving behind extended family. It meant not settling for less than full obedience, no matter the cost.

His father had set out for Caanan but settled for settling in Haran. God called for Abram to follow in complete obedience without any one else that was older or had been

there.

- Application

- o No matter how old you get, it feels devastating to lose the generation before you. Whether you are 30 or 13, 6 or 60, it hurts to lose those who have walked ahead of you. Not only did they love you and care for you, they helped give identity to your family. They also provided wisdom for you from their experience. This not only happened to some natural family members of the Hebrew church, it apparently to their church family, as we'll talk about in ch. 13.

- o It is intimidating to think about having to lead others into the future without someone older and more experiences.

But Abram did not have to know all the details to move forward. He knew the God whom He could trust, and He followed in obedience.

- o Children and youth, is it sometimes hard to obey your parents? Maybe you hear from your parents what I say to my children. I tell my children that they should obey their parents right away, all the way, in a joyful way. Hopefully, your parents have shown themselves to be trustworthy.

It is such a relief to be a child who can trust your parents. There are so many things you don't have to take care of. You can just trust them to take care of you; you just need to trust and follow.

If you have Christian parents calling you to do the same in your household, they are equipping you for understanding how you are to respond to God. Right away, all the way, in a joyful way.

- o Adults, God is calling us to do the same thing. "But what about all the terrible things going on in the world." In this world you will have troubles, but take heart, Christ tells us, for He has overcome the world. (John 16:33). But what about the difficult times that are ahead? Do not worry about tomorrow, each day has enough troubles of its own. Its not that we are not to be prepared for difficult days, but we are to always start from a place of trust in the One who cares much more about us than the flowers and the birds, whom He clothes and feeds daily.

- o To what God has called us, we can trust Him so that we obey, even if we don't know all the details.

**Faith that looks to Christ
Lives in confidence that
God will restore all things.
(vv. 9-10)**

-Faith that looks to Christ lives in confidence that God will restore all things, even if the world doesn't look like it now.

9 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. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

• Explanation

o Some of you have been learning how to interpret Scripture, whether in SS, through a class, or through a discipleship group. Let's put your learning to the test. How can the preacher say that Abraham was looking for a city? There is nothing in the narrative about Abraham that includes him trying to find a city to settle down in. Is the author just reading in his own theological preference back into the text?

o No, he's not reading his preferences back into the text. He's reading Abraham in context. He's reading him in the context of Genesis 1 and 3, reading him in the context of Babel, and in the context of his life.

o The Garden of Eden was a place for God to dwell with His people and a place for culture to be established and developed for the flourishing of mankind. So, from the beginning, God was the One laying the foundation for His city with mankind. Adam, as the first man, was supposed to develop further this dwelling place and shape it for beauty, for God's glory and our good. But Adam rebelled. Then in Genesis 11 after post-flood people started settling, the people built a city called Babel. In Genesis 1, God had commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, to spread this civilization in God's presence, this city of God. But these people of Babel actively rejected God's restrictions and explicitly cited God's very statement in a negative mockery. "Come let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4). God had removed people from His heavenly presence and guarded that entrance with an angel with a fiery sword. The people of Babel responded by saying that they'll try to build their way back. God said to fill the world. They said, "No, we'll stay right here. Thank you very much."

o Abraham was a nomad. That means he and his family stayed in tents and moved regularly. If you follow his life, you'll find him traveling from place to place. As you would go from place to place, you were putting yourself at risk from not knowing who the powerful people were in a new area or if someone would attack you for crossing a line you didn't know about. Lot, on the other hand, decided he'd be willing to compromise a little. He'd accept the wickedness of the Sodomites around him in

exchange for feelings of security.

o God was seeking to restore humanity to Himself and He was going to do so through a Man who would trust Him, even though His experience would be one as an Exile. Abraham looked forward to the greater man without an earthly home. Abraham was willing to forego settling in a city like the people around him because he knew God was at work building His new and greater city. He'd rather wait with God than dwell in the cities of the wicked. As Ps. 84:10 tells us, "Better is one day in your courts than 1000 elsewhere. I'd rather be a doorkeeper in God's house than to dwell among the tents of the wicked."

Jesus is the Second Adam who has obeyed (and is obeying) the Father's commission to prepare the City of God for restored humanity.

o John 14:1-3 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

• Application

o Revelation 21 and 22 describe what creation restored in Christ and by Christ is like. Here is just a sample from Revelation 22.

o Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

o Abraham trusted God and was willing to live in tents his whole life if that is what God had called him to. He trusted God's promise to bring about a nation through Him, even though he was a man without a nation. Because of that trust and confidence, he endured humble circumstances. In the very land that God had promised Him, Abraham was treated like an outsider.

o Do you ever feel like you don't belong here? at work? school? in your own house? If you belong to God, the world as we know it will not feel like home.

o Abraham was living in the very place that was supposed to be his, but he would not be able to enjoy as his home in his lifetime.

o This country is not going to suddenly decide to start being more hospitable to Christians. There will continue to be times in which we are treated as the lowest of the lows.

o Do you realize that God has promised this whole earth to His meek and lowly people? It is not just this world as it currently is that we are promised. He is going to bring about a new, restored version of creation with Christ having completed the work Adam did not do.

o Live in confidence that Christ has already paid the price for the property deed. Let's be willing to endure like Abraham who looked forward to Christ. Let's represent to the world what the city of God looks like through how we live as the church in the midst of this world.

**Faith that looks to Christ
Believes God when His promises
seem impossible and our scars
tell us not to trust. (vv. 11-12)**

Faith that looks to Christ believes God when His promises seem impossible and our scars tell us not to trust.

11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. 12 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.

- It is a natural and good thing for a married couple to want to have children. In this life, there are many things that are naturally good desires that some take for granted and that others long to experience: mostly happy and peaceful marriage, children with good relationship, life without a chronic illness, a successful career you enjoy.
- If you are longing for such things that seem natural to God's original design for us, things you see others enjoying and God has not answered your prayers in the way you have asked, you can begin to understand how Sarah felt. It feels cruel enough not to have a child you are longing for, but it is even harder when you hear that your husband has been promised to have innumerable descendants come through your shared offspring. Then years pass and no change. Excitement turns into questioning. Questioning turns into doubt. Doubt tempts you to become cynical. Is it a shock, then, that Sarah laughed when God promised that Sarah would have a baby within a year?
- You get this awkward moment, then, of Sarah trying to pretend like she didn't laugh. Look, if that was not awkward enough, think about this awkwardness:
 - o Adults, please read between the lines. I'll let you decide on how you explain what I say to your children. Abraham and Sarah considered their relationship to be past childbearing age. Their bodies had begun changing, and they were without the medical technology we have today to assist with all of that.
 - o So when Abraham said, "Well, if God wants this to happen, are you up for trusting him," Sarah had to process through everything emotionally, intellectually, relationally, and physically.
- Sarah had scars from her past, scars that were still very fresh to her years later, scars that reminded her of how painful failed hopes can be.
- If you live long enough, you'll get scars. The invisible ones often take longer to heal than the ones on our skin. These internal scars make us feel like we can't trust

anyone, especially anyone that either promises us hope or asks us to trust them. But the very basis of faith is trust.

- Sarah trusted God's promise with her very self. He answered that trust with Isaac. The point is NOT that if we trust God that He will give us exactly what we are asking for. But He does give us the Son of Promise, He gives us Christ.
- Job asked for relief and asked for God to tell him exactly why He allowed every suffering in Job's life. He had scars, physically and internally. He didn't get to know why he had to endure those scars, but he got healing that was greater. He got to see God through His pain.
- You can trust God with your scars. In the midst of our pain, we get to see Christ, who meets us in our pain and walks with us home to a place in which we will have no more scars.
- You can trust God more than the feeling of your scars. One day, we will have all our scars healed if we trust God until the end. One day there will be no scars in heaven, no scars in the new heaven and earth, no scars except on one.
- Jesus communicated to Thomas that if he could not trust others about God's promise of resurrection, then he can inspect His scars He suffered on behalf of Thomas. The Resurrected Jesus's scars are proof that God cares and brings new life, that God is trustworthy.
- You can trust God with your scars. You can trust Him beyond what you see.

The original audience was thinking about turning their back on Christ so they could be like Abraham and the patriarchs in their faith.

- But the preacher brought it home to them.
- You've been tempted to get off the trail that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob walked. Fear has distracted you from the truth that they were looking forward to Christ Jesus. They may not have known His name or everything about Him, but they longed for the fullness of God's promise. And Jesus is the promise kept and fulfilled. By means of Jesus, we have a home we are pressing forward to. Don't turn back for the sake of your old lives or even for the sake of your scars. Your healing and home are ahead with Christ. Be willing to be treated as different and weird, to be treated as if you don't belong, so long as you are identifying with Christ by faith.

