

Hebrews 11:8-16

This portion of Hebrews 11 brings us to the "parents" of our faith - Abraham and Sarah. After writing about the faith of Abel and Enoch (it is interesting that Adam is not included in this list) we are first told about Abraham, who, probably as much as any biblical personage, embodies faith. Then, one that is often not considered as "faithful," Sarah, is said to be a woman of faith. We learn 4 principles from Abraham and Sarah.

1. If God calls you to go somewhere, you don't need all the answers to what will occur - vs. 8.
2. Abraham remained where he was called even through difficult circumstances. The reason he could persevere is he knew God had a better place prepared for him - vs. 9-10.
3. Although initially doubting the promises of God, she overcame her doubts and "she judged him faithful who had promised," - vs. 11.
4. Abraham and Sarah (also Isaac and Jacob, vs. 9) embraced the promises of God and considered themselves strangers and foreigners as their city was to be built by God - vs. 13.

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

Faith obeys. This is the first comment about the life of Abraham. Faith doesn't ask questions nor procrastinates nor gives excuses. Faith obeys.

- King Saul had many excuses for not obeying:

1 Samuel 15:	1-3 7-9	God's command Saul's actions
	10-14 15	Samuel confronts Saul Saul's excuse
	16-19 20-21	Samuel again confronts Saul Saul again makes an excuse
	22-23 24-25	For a third time Samuel confronts Saul Saul again makes an excuse

Saul's disobedience to the word of God led to additional wrong choices and ultimately his death.

1 Chronicles 10:13-14

- 13 So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it;
- 14 And enquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

- Believing the Word of God (faith) is how we please God

"And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Luke 11:27-28

1. If God calls you to go somewhere, you don't need all the answers to what will occur.

Faith obeys even when it doesn't know the end result.

God will lead and provide. See Joshua 24:3

"And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all

the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.”

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

Abraham never had a home. He dwelt in tents with his family.

Steven, in his Acts 7 sermon said this about Abraham:

- 3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.**
- 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.**
- 5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.**

Abraham did what he did because he knew he could trust in God’s promise.

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

The Greek text has the definite article “the” before city and foundations.

Abraham was looking for a particular city with foundations, not just any city.

- 1) “Not only on the face of this earth is there a Jerusalem, called in Hebrew *Yerushalayim Shel Matta* (‘Jerusalem the Lower’), but also in heaven is there such a city: *Yerushalayim Shel Maalah* (‘Jerusalem the Upper’). Zev Vilnay, Legends of Jerusalem, page 156
- 2) “In these legends the heavenly Jerusalem is the archetype of the good to come, which will be revealed to all at the redemption of the world. At present she hovers above the earthly Jerusalem, even when the latter lies in ruin or sin, but only the most righteous can see her, in moments of grace. In Christian tradition, she is described at the end of the New Testament as descending out of heaven perfect and complete at the consummation of history, while Jewish legends emphasize the building from below to actualize the heavenly Jerusalem.”
Yitzhak I. Hayutman, Realizing the Heavenly Jerusalem, The Academy of Jerusalem Monographs - #3 (March 1995)
- 3) The *Babylonian Talmud Berakot 17a* speaks of *Olam-ha-Ba* (the world to come) in this way: “...no eating and drinking, no begetting of children, no bargaining, no jealousy and hatred, and no strife; but the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads enjoying the effulgence of the *Shekinah* (‘Presence of God’).” This is obviously a reference to what we would call the eternal kingdom or heaven.

2. Abraham remained where he was called even through difficult circumstances. The reason he could persevere is he knew God had a better place prepared for him.

Abraham knew there was a city in heaven where he would one day reside. We, believers, have the same promise, Revelation 21:1-3.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.
And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

Our perspective should be the eternal and not the temporal!

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Colossians 3:2

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Genesis 18:9-15: the promise of pregnancy and Sarah laughs in unbelief

"And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.
And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.
Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.
Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?
And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?
Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.
Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh."

Genesis 21:1-7: the birth of Isaac where Sarah now would laugh in faith

"And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.
For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.
And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.
And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.
And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.
And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.
And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age."

3. Although initially doubting the promises of God, she overcame her doubts and "she judged him faithful who had promised."

There are many instances in scripture where people failed God but became stronger in the end. Consider Abraham and the many times he failed. In the end, Genesis 22, he believed God so completely that he was willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

There would be, and are, an innumerable number of Jewish people.
Genesis 15:5 gives the same promise.

"And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

They died never having received the promises. But they:

- 1) Saw them with "eyes" of faith
- 2) Were convinced (persuaded) of the truth of the promise
- 3) Embraced the promises
- 4) Confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in this world

4. Abraham and Sarah (also Isaac and Jacob, vs. 9) embraced the promises of God and considered themselves strangers and foreigners as their city was to be built by God.

We need to:

See with the "eyes" of faith

Be persuaded of God's promises

Embrace His promises

And live as citizens of heaven (not discouraged, agitated, or overjoyed with whatever happens with the political system we live under).

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

They (Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob) were very open in declaring that they are looking for another country much better than what we have now.

This would also apply to any of us who believe and embrace the promises of God. Philippians 3:20:

“For our **conversation** [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”

πολιτευμα {pol-it'-yoo-mah} Meaning: a community, i.e. (abstractly) citizenship (figuratively):--conversation.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

If one focuses too much on where he came from there is a greater chance of him returning to it.

Abraham understood the danger of going back. Genesis 24:1-9

We need to focus on heavenly things:

Colossians 3:1-2 “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

16 But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Because they were men and women of faith, God was not ashamed to be called their God.

He has prepared a city for them and for us - John 14:2.

“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”