



Hebrews 11:8-16

FAITH DESPITE THE UNKNOWN

Hebrews was written around AD 65 to a church of mostly Jewish believers, perhaps in the city of Rome. As Christians, they were facing increasing opposition, ostracism, and persecution under the reign of the Roman emperor, Nero. Thus, they were being tempted to drift away from Christ and to drift apart from one another, going back to the “safety” of Judaism.

Hebrews 1-2 present Jesus as better than the *angels* since He is the Son of God and the Son of Man, the only Mediator.

Hebrews 3-4 present Jesus as better than *Moses* since He is a better deliverer who leads His people into a better rest.

Hebrews 5-10 present Jesus as better than *Aaron and the Levitical priesthood* since He is the eternal King-Priest.

Hebrews 11-13 exhort us to live in light of Jesus’ better-ness. Since Jesus is better than any other “savior” and better than anything else in this world, then we are to live by faith in Him.

My struggle right now...

Abraham is the prime example of faith in Scripture (cf. Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:9). But his life is far from doubt-free or care-free. Abraham’s walk of faith included many twists and turns but the trajectory of his life was aimed at the heart of God.

TRUSTING GOD WHEN YOU DON’T KNOW _____

Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees in ~2000 BC—a time when Ur was the largest, most advanced, most prosperous city in the world (cf. Gen. 11:27-12:3; Acts 7:2-4). It was also a center of pagan idolatry (cf. Josh. 24:2).

Abraham obeyed—leaving his homeland, kindred, and father’s house (i.e., prosperity, familiarity, and security)—and *went out not knowing where he was going* (11:8).

Faith. Greek, *pistis*. Used 32x in Hebrews, 24x in Hebrews 11. From the root stem, *peith-*, which has the basic meaning of trust (cf. Latin, *fides*) (Becker).

Most of us live a cautious life on the principle of safety first; but to live the Christian life there is necessary a certain reckless willingness to adventure. If faith can see every step of the way, it is not really faith. It is sometimes necessary for the Christian to take the way to which the voice of God is calling him without knowing what the consequences will be. Like Abraham he has to go out not knowing where he is going. —William Barclay

Have you been asking God what He is going to do? He will never tell you. God does not tell you what He is going to do; He reveals to you Who He is. —Oswald Chambers

We walk moment by moment, step by step with Him, the past under the blood, the future in His keeping. —Norman Grubb

Ur of the Chaldees is located in present-day southern Iraq. It was the largest city in the world from ~2300 to 1980 BC. The Great Ziggurat of Ur still stands today.

TRUSTING GOD WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW _____

God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants (cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15-17; 15:7, 18-21; 17:8) but, during Abraham's lifetime, he traveled from place to place, living in tents, and never possessed anything except the plot of land he bought to bury his wife, Sarah (cf. Gen. 23:1-20).

Abraham learned to wait, trusting God to provide far more than an earthly plot of ground but instead a city with an eternal foundation, planned and built by God.

TRUSTING GOD WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW _____

God also promised Abraham innumerable descendants (cf. Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 15:5) though, at the time Abraham entered the Promised Land (at age 75), he had no children. Twenty-four years passed and God seemingly made it worse by changing his name from Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham ("father of a multitude"). God never explained why he allowed 25 years to pass before He fulfilled His promise (cf. Gen. 21:1-7).

TRUSTING GOD WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW _____

Sarah (age 90) was past the age of childbearing and Abraham (age 100) was "as good as dead," yet God fulfilled His promise. Though both Abraham and Sarah struggled to believe, even trying to help God out in the process (cf. Gen. 15:2; 16:2; 17:18), they counted God faithful and their laughter of doubt (17:17; 18:12) turned into the Laughter (Isaac) of joy (21:6).

THE "SECRET" TO A LIFE OF FAITH (11:13-16)

- _____ God's promises.
- _____ that this present world is not your home.
- _____ God's country first (cf. Matt. 6:33).
- _____ the course...don't turn back.

God has prepared an eternal, beautiful, joyful city for us and He is proud of us when we set our eyes on it (cf. Rev. 21:22).

To wait is even harder than to adventure. —William Barclay

Our preoccupation with what lies ahead betrays a desire to control a future that simply cannot be controlled. We want the security of knowing what the future will bring rather than risk trusting God as the unknown future unfolds before us. We keep hoping that light will shine to illumine the entire journey ahead so that we will know everything there is to know about the future, and thus be spared the difficulty of having to trust God.

—Jerry Sittser

Abraham was looking for a city that had foundations. There is nothing on earth that really has a foundation. Even those buildings that seem most firm will be dissolved and burned up in the last general fire. All things here pass away.

—Charles Spurgeon

The world is a bridge. The wise man will pass over it but will not build his house upon it.

—Anonymous

Exiles were not viewed with favor in the ancient world. To reside in a country other than one's own carried a stigma in antiquity. —Raymond Brown

Stranger. Greek, *xenos*, "foreigner, stranger, refugee."

Pilgrim. Greek, *parepidemos*, "away from one's own people."

Homeland. Greek, *patris*, "one's fatherland." The root of the word "patriotism."

We have no fatherland on earth —Clement of Alexandria