

Descriptions and Examples of Persevering Faith: 11:1 – 12:3

Creation through Noah: 11:3 – 7

The Faith of Abraham and His Heirs (11:8 – 22)

Abraham (vv. 8 – 10)

“when he was called” (Genesis 12:1 – 3)

The origin of faith is the word of God (Romans 10:17). God is the initiator. Abraham's call was an act of sovereign grace: Isaiah 51:1-2; Joshua 24:2; Acts 7:2. Prior to God's call, Abraham was estranged from God, part of a heathen family. There was nothing in Abraham deserving of this call.

“For the first time in Abraham's life God became a living reality to him.” [Pink]

Abraham's first act of faith was to believe God when there was no clear indication of the place to which God was calling him. He was promised a land, but not told the location of the land, trusting that God would reveal the place and give it to him.

“[he] obeyed; and he went out”

Abraham's obedience flowed from his faith. Faith is the root, obedience is the fruit.

“he sojourned”

By faith he set out, and by faith he sojourned. He did not possess the land. Rather, he lived as an exile. It seemed as if God's promise wasn't true, yet “by faith he sojourned.” He continued believing God. “Even though his promise was not realized in their lifetime, they clung to the promise.” [Tom Schreiner]

“he looked for a city”

Abraham's faith enabled him to persevere in believing God despite circumstances indicating God's promise had failed. The author reveals that Abraham's faith was in something future, something permanent.

In the same way that the tabernacle in the wilderness (9:1-10) was earthly and temporary, pointing to the heavenly tabernacle (9:24), so Abraham “looked for a city whose builder and maker is God” and not man:

An unshakable city that hearkens back to Old Testament promises about Jerusalem: Isaiah 33:20; 54:11-12; Psalm 87:1-3

The writer will say a similar thing about the kingdom in 12:28.

The city of man is temporal, but the city of God is eternal. No human being can overthrow the city of God. By faith Abraham realized something greater than Canaan was awaiting him, that he would inherit the city of God.

To God Be the Glory

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To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.*

Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.