

**Hebrews 11:8-13(a)**  
**June 26, 2016**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Illustration: “Ready – Set – GO!!”

Q: Have you ever watched an Olympic event like the 100-yard dash? [Who hasn't?!!]

Q: How important are the starting blocks to them? Tell me what you observe as their prep.

- The spacing between each pedal of the block has to be just right.
- Each has a routine to keep their leg muscles loose.
- Some get into the starting blocks and make quick starts before they are called to the line
- Some do major leg extensions before they plant their feet into their pedals.
- The thumb and forefingers are placed just right to distribute the weight of their torso.

Then you hear the starter say, “Runners take your mark – Get Set – GO!! I have never seen such intensity go into getting prepped and then out of the starting blocks. But I promise you, once they hear the word “GO,” they are out of there with an amazing, explosive power with their legs to get them toward the finish line.

Q: I wonder if we “live by faith” with this kind of intensity or intentionality like that of a racer who is chomping at the bit to run his/her race. Or do we approach each day casually and let things happen? When we wake up each morning, do we have a strong sense of anticipation and expectation that God has a special assignment for us? Do we listen for His marching orders? What are your thoughts?

**Transition:** Today, we continue our study of the inductees into the Hall of Faith, which leads off with Abraham. Abraham wasn't a “sprinter,” but when he heard God tell him to “go,” he didn't delay. He was out of the starting blocks without asking questions. We all appreciate good examples to follow, so let's see how **All of us can improve living by faith by following the EXAMPLES of those whom God commended.** Let's study some more EXAMPLES of those who lived by faith and be inspired!

**X-REF:** Before we actually read the text in Hebrews, let's read Genesis 12:1-7 to get the storyline in place.

Q: What did God promise Abraham? [God would make him into a great nation, bless him, make his name great, he would be a blessing to others, God would bless those who blessed Abram and curse those who cursed Abram, and all peoples would be blessed through Abram]

Q: If you were Abram, would those promises be enough to get you leave what was familiar and travel to a place unknown?!

Q: What did it cost Abram to live by faith? [He had to leave his country, his people, and his father's household to go to an unknown land. He went from being comfortable to being a sojourner.]

Q: What was Abram allowed to keep for his journey? [He was allowed to take his wife, his possessions and the people who helped take care of his possessions]

Q: How soon did Abram leave once God told him to "go?" [Right away. You don't read excuses of needing three days or a week to say goodbye to family members.]

Q v.8-10: God openly shared with Abram how he would be rewarded for living by faith. What reward do you expect faith to lead you to? [Let people process this.]

So with this storyline in mind, someone read Heb 11:8-13

**BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Heb 11:8-13]**

V.8:

- By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

V.9:

- By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

V.10:

- For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

V.11:

- By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

V.12:

- And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

V.13:

- All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.

**LOOK:**

Q: When God calls us to do His will, do we embrace it with intentionality and get out of the starting blocks well? When He says, "GO," do we go?!

Q: What did we learn from those who were inducted into the Hall of Faith that we can apply to help us improve living by faith?

**Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 318–319). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

*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!

**Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, p. 808). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

## 2. THE DIVINE ACCEPTANCE OF FAITH (11:8-16)

11:8–10. That the readers should look forward to “the world to come” and treat their present experience as a pilgrimage is a lesson enforced by the life of **Abraham**. This great patriarch lived **like a stranger** in a land **he would later receive as his inheritance**. So also would the readers inherit if they, like this forefather, kept **looking forward to the city with foundations**, a reference to the heavenly and eternal Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:2, 9–27).

11:11–12. The NIV introduces the word **Abraham** into these verses. But its marginal reading is preferable: “By faith even Sarah, who was past age, was enabled to bear children because she....” The NIV interpretation is influenced by the opinion that the phrase **to become a father** (*eis katabolēn spermatos*) can refer only to the male parent, but this need not be so. The writer here chose to introduce his first heroine of faith, one who was able to overlook the physical limitation of her own barrenness to become a fruitful mother. Since “she considered Him faithful who had promised” (NASB) so also should the readers (cf. 10:23). Her **faith** in fact, contributed to the startling multiplication of her husband’s seed, when old Abraham was **as good as dead**.

11:13–16. In an impressive summary of his discussion thus far, the writer pointed out that people can be **still living by faith** when they die, even if by that time they do **not receive the things promised**. By faith the old saints saw the promised realities **from a distance** and persisted in their pilgrim character, **looking for a country of their own** and refusing to **return** to the land they had left. So too the readers should renounce the **opportunity** to go back to any form of their ancestral religion and should persist in **longing for a better country—a heavenly one**. If they did so they, like the patriarchs, would be people with whom **God** would **not be ashamed** to be associated.