

Trust in the God who keeps His word (Hebrews 11:8–22)

The blessed future for children of God is hidden from our eyes. Instead many see persecution, trials, and in some places even martyrdom. Others before us have trusted God when God's ways seemed unfathomable and promises were not fulfilled in this life. They trusted Him beyond natural reason; they trusted Him beyond the grave; and they gained God's approval. Their examples encourage us to live by faith as well.

I. *Faith trusts in God beyond natural reason (11:8–12).*

1. *Abraham obeyed despite the unknown (11:8).*

See Genesis 12:1–7; 26:5. Abraham obeyed in response to the word of God, revealing his faith.

2. *Abraham sojourned without settling in the land of promise (11:9–10).*

See Genesis 12–25. Abraham, as well as Isaac and Jacob, remained “sojourners” or resident aliens in the land promised to them. His greater hope, his greater desire to be pleasing to God, focused on a heavenly, permanent home in the presence of God.

3. *Abraham and Sarah conceived beyond natural ability (11:11–12).*

Though promised innumerable descendants by God (Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:2–6; etc.), Abraham was old and Sarah barren (Genesis 17:17). But God intervened, kept His promise, and they had a son (Genesis 18:10; 21:1–2), through whom eventually came a great nation.

II. *Faith trusts in God beyond the grave (11:13–22).*

1. *Such faith explained (11:13–16):*

a. True faith is not shaken by a lack of fulfilment on this side of the grave.

The patriarchs had only a glimpse of the fulfilment of God's promises, but that did not shake their faith even unto death.

b. True faith grasps for spiritual realities more than temporal blessings.

The patriarchs recognition of a pilgrim life (cf. Genesis 23:4; 47:9) showed earth did not satisfy them, but they were looking for a heavenly home.

c. True faith is a faith rewarded by God with Himself.

Better than calling God our God, God is not ashamed to be called the God of those who trust in Him through life and beyond the grave.

2. *Such faith illustrated (11:17–22):*

a. Abraham (11:17–19):

See Genesis 22:1–2 ff. Abraham so trusted God's promise that he would have many descendants through Isaac, that he was willing to obey God and sacrifice Isaac, believing that God would resurrect him (see Genesis 22:5). Even death could not stop God from keeping His word.

b. Isaac (11:20):

See Genesis 27:1–28:5. Though Isaac did not see the promises fulfilled, he too blessed his sons and their futures demonstrating his trust in God beyond his own death.

c. Jacob (11:21):

See Genesis 47:28–49:33 for the blessings of all his sons. Within the context of blessing Manasseh and Ephraim, Joseph's sons, Jacob repeats God's promises of the land and of innumerable descendants, showing his trust in God beyond his own death.

d. Joseph (11:22):

See Genesis 50:22–26. Joseph's instruction to the sons of Israel as he neared death demonstrated his trust in God to return them to the promised land (Genesis 15:13) and his belief that the land indeed would be given to them, even though it would be 400 years after his own death.

True faith trusts God to keep His word in His timing. His wisdom is unsearchable (Romans 11:33), but our inability to understand should not stop us obeying. Obedience to God glorifies Him and reveals our faith.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- Obedience to God can cause the believer to have trouble with people. When are you challenged in this? What encourages you? How would you encourage others to obedient faithfulness, even when it seems “unreasonable”?
- Are you thoroughly convinced that heaven, being with Christ, is your only true home? What comfort do you draw from this?
- The patriarchs listed expressed their faith beyond the grave somewhat differently. What impressed you most? Why? How will this affect how you think or live?