

Hebrews

Chapter 11:8-19

⁸ *By faith Abraham, **when he was called, obeyed** by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he left, not **knowing** where he was going.*

When he was called, obeyed > Guthrie > He obeyed when he was called to go out, a direct reference to **Genesis 12:1–3**. The construction in the Greek shows that the obedience accompanied the calling. It was, in fact, spontaneous, which was all the more remarkable because he did not know where he was going.

Vincent > (The Greek grammar) indicates Abraham's immediate obedience to the call: while he was yet being called.

Wuest > The words “When he was called” are the translation of a present participle which speaks of action going on at the same time as that of the leading verb, which is “obeyed.” The translation is “Abraham, while he was being called, obeyed.”

Genesis 12:1–3 > ¹ *Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”*

Swindoll > The Bible says, “the LORD had spoken to him” (**Gen. 12:4**), and “the LORD appeared to Abram” (**Gen. 12:7**). This is where true faith rests—on the clear revelation of God (Rom. 10:17).

Genesis 12:4 > ⁴ *So Abram went away as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.*

Genesis 12:7 > ⁷ *And the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your ^ldescendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.*

Knowing > Wuest > The word “knowing” is the translation, not of *ginosko* or *oida*, the usual words for knowing, but of *epistamai* which means “to put one’s attention on, to fix one’s thoughts on, to know.” Abraham’s faith was so great, that he was not particularly concerned as to what the nature of the country was.

Here is Wuest’s translation of verse 8 > *By faith Abraham, while he was being called, obeyed to go out into a place which he was about to be receiving as an inheritance, and he went out, not troubling his mind as to where he was going.*

⁹ By faith he lived as a **stranger in the land of promise**, as in a **foreign land**, living in **tents** with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he **was looking** for the city which has **foundations**, whose architect and builder is God.

Stranger > Barclay > In 11:9, he uses the word *paroikein*, to stay for a time, of Abraham. A *paroikos* was a resident alien. The word is used of the Jews when they were captives in Babylon and in Egypt. Anyone called *paroikos* was not considered much above a slave in the social scale and had to pay an alien tax.

The land of promise > Vincent > Note the article, omitted in A.V., the land of THE promise

Genesis 13:14-17 > ¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now raise your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward, and eastward and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants forever. ¹⁶ I will make your descendants as plentiful as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can count the dust of the earth, then your descendants could also be counted. ¹⁷ Arise, walk about in the land through its length and width; for I will give it to you."

Foreign > Strong's > belonging to another

Barnes > In all respects he lived there as if he had no special right in the soil; as if he never expected to own it; as if he were in a country wholly owned by others.

Was looking > Precept Austin > (The Greek words and tense) means literally to receive or accept from some source. In regard to of future events it means to wait for them expecting them to happen. is in the picturesque progressive imperfect, his steady and patient waiting in spite of disappointment.

Pink > **Acts 7:5** > ⁵ But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him, even though he had no child.

Tents ... Foundations > Look at the comparison! (Question > is our heart a "Tent Dweller" or a "Foundation Dweller"? Where is "Home" to our hearts?)

Here is Wuest's translation of verses 9-10 > *By faith he lived as a foreigner without rights of citizenship in the land of the promise as in a land not his own, having settled down to live in tents with Isaac and Jacob, joint-heirs with him of the promise, the same one, for he was constantly waiting for and expecting the city having the foundations, the architect and builder of which is God.*

¹¹ *By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.* ¹² *Therefore even from one man, and one who was as good as dead at that, there were born descendants who were just as the stars of heaven in number, and as the innumerable grains of sand along the seashore.*

Herself > Pink The word "herself" is emphatic

Ability > The Greek *power* word

Conceive > Strong's > a laying down

HELPS > *katá*, "exactly according to," down from the most general to the most specific detail, "following all the way along," and *bállō*, "to cast") – properly, a *foundation*, cast according to a blueprint (original design); the *substructure* which determines the entire direction (destination) of all that follows; the foundation-plan, upon which the entire super-structure is built; (figuratively) the *beginning (founding)* that purposefully designs all that follows.

Zuck > 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.

Vincent > In every other instance in N.T. (the Greek word used) means *foundation*, and appears in the phrase *foundation of the world*. Originally it means throwing down; hence, the depositing of the male seed in the womb. The sentence may be explained either, "received strength as regarded the deposition of seed," to fructify it; or, "received strength for the foundation of a posterity,"

TDNT > (the Greek word) meant "laying down" is used for, e.g., the casting of seed, human begetting, the sowing of war, and the establishment of government.

TDNT stands for **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament** which was edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich and translated from the German by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. This 10-volume set is a standard resource for in-depth word studies of every word of theological or religious significance in the Greek New Testament.

(Uteley > It is significant that none of the patriarch's wives (except Leah) could conceive without the help of God. Also, none of the first-born children were the heirs of promise.)

Sarah herself received ability to conceive > Swindoll > Remember, in her old age, Sarah still hadn't conceived and borne a son, even though that was part of the package of promises God had given to Abraham when they believed and left their homeland in obedience to God's word (**Gen. 12:1-3** [we saw this passage referenced in verse 8 above], 7; 13:16).

Along the seashore > Vincent > Lit. by the lip of the sea

Wuest's translation of verse 11 > *By faith Sarah herself also received power as regards the deposition of seed, and that when she was past age, because she considered Him faithful who promised.*

¹³ **All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen and welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.**

Precept Austin > Note that beginning in Hebrews 11:13 and going through verse 16 the writer takes a break and instead of giving examples of saints who expressed faith, he comments on the nature of the faith that he has been illustrating in these individuals. Notice that one could go from Hebrews 11:12 to Hebrews 11:17 without skipping a beat.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises > Constable > He emphasized the eschatological perspective that is the point of this entire unit (vv. 8-22). These patriarchs all continued to live by faith to the very end of their lives, and they died believing that God would eventually fulfill His promises to them. They looked forward to possessing a land that God had promised to give them. They did not turn back to what they had left (verse 14), which might have encouraged them to apostatize.

In faith > Swindoll > the Greek phrase translated "*in faith*" is different from the term translated "*by faith*" throughout Hebrews 11. This change is significant here, as Guthrie notes, "The words . . . could more literally be translated 'according to faith,' which shows faith to be the rule by which they lived and died. In spite of not having received the promise, they had in a measure experienced it."

Wuest translates the phrase as > *These all died dominated by faith*

Welcomed them > Strong's > From *a* (as a particle of union) and a presumed form of *spao*; *to enfold in the arms*, i.e. (by implication) to salute, (figuratively) to welcome -- embrace, greet, salute, take leave.

Barnes > It means properly "to draw to oneself;" and then to embrace as one does a friend from whom he has been separated. It then means to greet, salute, welcome, and here means a joyful greeting of those promises; or a pressing them to the heart as we do a friend.

Welcomed them from a distance > Vincent > Rend. "having seen them from afar and greeted them": as seamen wave their greeting to a country seen far off on the horizon, on which they cannot land.

Confessed that they were strangers > Barnes > **Genesis 23:3-4** > ³ Then Abraham arose from mourning before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, ⁴ "I am a stranger and a foreign resident among you; give me a burial site among you so that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

Strangers > Barclay > He calls them *xenoi*. *Xenos* is the word for a stranger and a foreigner. In the ancient world, the fate of strangers was hard. They were regarded with hatred and suspicion and contempt. In Sparta, *xenos* was the equivalent of *barbaros*, barbarian.

Exiles > Barclay > (Here) he uses the word *parepidēmos*. A *parepidēmos* was a person who was staying there temporarily and who had a permanent home somewhere else. A *parepidēmos* was someone in lodgings, someone without a home in a particular place at a particular time.

¹⁴ For those who say such things **make it clear** that they are seeking a **country** of their own. ¹⁵ And indeed if they had been **thinking of** that country which they left, they would have had opportunity **to return**.

Make it clear > Precept Austin > (*emphanizo* from *en = in, into + phaino = show, make visible, make conspicuous*) means to make visible, to lay something open to view (clear or plain) so all can see

Country > Strong's > *patris* > of one's fathers, fatherland

Guthrie > 14. This idea of strangers and exiles is expounded in the next three verses, the main idea of which is the better country (verse 16). The Old Testament record of the patriarchs demonstrates that they never obtained a true homeland (*patris*). The word used is significant for it is rare in both the Septuagint and the New Testament. It means more than a place of habitation. It means a fatherland where the nation can find its roots. This was the desire of the patriarchs and was a continuing motif for the people of Israel throughout their history, although the writer of this epistle is thinking of it in spiritual rather than national terms.

Thinking of > Precept Austin > means to exercise memory, call something to mind, recollect, to pay attention to something and so to be warned. The idea is if they had "habitually remembered."

To return > Vincent > Lit. bend their way back again

¹⁶ *But as it is, they **desire** a better country, that is, a heavenly one. **Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God**; for He has prepared a city for them.*

Desire > Precept Austin > literally means to stretch out especially with one's hands, to snatch, to reach out for. It pictures one stretching one's self out in order to touch or to grasp something. Metaphorically **oregomai** means to desire something, to covet, to long after, to try to gain, to be ambitious. Oregomai pictures a runner lunging for the finish line.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God > Amen!

Remember who the author is talking to in these verses ... individuals who were looking back and not forward. Constable > God prepared a heavenly habitation ("a better country") for them, and He has done the same for us (John 14:1-3). Each example of faith that the writer has cited so far is a positive one involving a believer who kept on trusting God and His promises in spite of the temptation to stop trusting. That is what the writer was urging his readers to do throughout this epistle: Keep on trusting and do not turn back. In every case God approved and rewarded the continuing faith of the faithful.

¹⁷ *By faith Abraham, when he was **tested, offered up Isaac**, and the one who had received the promises was **offering up his only** (son); ¹⁸ (it was he) to whom it was said, "**Through Isaac your descendants shall be named.**"*

Tested > Strong's > to make proof of, to attempt, test, tempt

Offered up Isaac > Swindoll > Perhaps more shocking than God's incomprehensible command to sacrifice Isaac was Abraham's immediate obedience! No arguing. No hesitation. No bargaining. No reminding God how long he and Sarah had waited. Instead, Abraham got up early, saddled up his donkey, and headed out to obey (**Gen. 22:3**; Heb. 11:17).

Gen. 22:3 > ³ *So Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place of which God had told him.*

Offered up ... Offering up > Guthrie brings up an interesting change of tense in this repeating phrase ("offer up") that is not visible in Strong's > He says that the Greek grammar used in the two uses of "offering up" are different from one another.

Kent Hughes > explains the differences in the grammar > "Abraham really did "sacrifice" Isaac. The Greek (grammar) used when the text says that he "offered Isaac as a sacrifice" refers to a completed action in past time. This means that the sacrifice actually took place as far as Abraham's resolve and obedience were concerned. From the divine perspective, as well as from Abraham's perspective, Abraham did it!

But immediately the same verb is used in the imperfect tense in the following statement—he “was about to sacrifice his one and only son”—indicating that it did not physically happen.

The point is, in terms of obedience to God, Abraham did it. He completely offered his beloved Isaac, the laughter and joy of his life.

Here is how Wuest translates this phrase > *By faith Abraham offered up Isaac while being put to the test;*

His only > (KJV > *Only begotten*) > Precept Austin > (*monogenes* from *mónos* = *only* + *génos* = *offspring, posterity* from verb *gínomai* = *come into existence*) means *only begotten, unique, one of a kind* or *one and only*. The word "son" is not in the Greek text so literally this reads "the only begotten".

Precept Austin > The writer of Hebrews proceeds to quote from **Genesis 22:12** to prove the point that Isaac was the *unique* son of Abraham for through Isaac's seed must pass the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, not through the seed of Abraham's other son Ishmael. In addition, Abraham by Keturah had six more sons named in **Genesis 25:1, 2**

Genesis 22:12 > ¹² *He said, “Do not reach out your hand against the boy, and do not do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”*

Genesis 25:1, 2 > ¹ *Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.* ² *She bore to him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.*

Swindoll > Sometimes, just one tiny letter in a word can make all the difference. In **Genesis 22:5**, Abraham told his servants that he and Isaac were going to go on farther, worship, and “return” (NASB). Abraham used the plural form of the Hebrew verb—*nashuvah* (“we will return”)—rather than the singular form—*ashuvah* (“I will return”). This one-letter change (*a* to *na*) evinces Abraham’s complete trust in God’s promise to make Isaac’s offspring into a mighty nation (Heb. 11:18).

Genesis 22:5 > ⁵ *Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the boy will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.”*

Through Isaac your descendants shall be named > **Genesis 21:12** > ¹² *But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the boy and your slave woman; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named.*

¹⁹ He **considered** that God is **able** to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a **type**.

Considered > Precept Austin > (*logizomai* from *lógos* = *reason, word, account*) means to reckon, compute, calculate, to take into account, to deliberate, weigh and implies a process of reasoning. *Logizomai* refers to a settled conclusion by careful study and reasoning and so represents a reasoned conclusion. It was a term frequently used in the business community of Paul's day and meant to impute or credit to one's account.

Able > Precept Austin > (*dunatos* related to *dunamis* refers having the power by virtue of inherent ability) means powerful, mighty, strong and is an attribute of God, Luke referring appropriately to God as "the Mighty One"

Type > MacArthur > The word is the same as in 9:9 (*parabolé*), which is the basis for the English word parable. Abraham received Isaac back from the dead as it were even though Isaac had not been slain.

Henry Morris > Abraham's offer of Isaac can be taken as a thrilling type of God offering His only begotten Son.

Precept Austin > Certainly one cannot read the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac without thinking of passages like ³²*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)*

Wuest translates it > *because of which fact he also received him back in the form of a parable.*