

ABRAHAM, A PATTERN TO BELIEVERS

NO. 2292

A SERMON

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, Dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”
Hebrews 11:9-10*

ABRAHAM'S life, taken literally, is full of instruction, but we shall be wise to take the spirit of it and endeavor to make it our own. We cannot live just as Abraham did, but we can carry out the great principles which lay at the root of Abraham's life, and if the Holy Spirit will work in us a like degree of faith to that of the holy patriarch, we may glorify God by our lives, even as he did.

The first point in which we must follow him is that our life must be a life of faith. We cannot be children of believing Abraham unless we live by believing. If you follow your senses, you go by what you see. Now, by what this poor flesh would teach you to desire, you will know nothing of the life of Abraham.

He was a man who saw what eyes can never see. He heard what ears can never hear, and he was moved, guided, actuated by motives which men of the world can never feel. He was a great man, a very prince among men—first, chief and father of all believing men—but he owed the pre-eminence of his character to the greatness of his faith. We must have his faith and we must live by it, as he lived by it—and then God will be able to make something of even such poor, feeble creatures as we are.

Let me remind you of what we read in the sixth verse, “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” If we would be like “faithful Abraham,” we must begin by being believers.

Abraham is in three things a pattern to us who believe, and those three things will be the divisions of our subject tonight. He is a pattern to us, first, *in the mode of his living*—“He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents.” Secondly, Abraham is a pattern to believers *in the company he kept*—“With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.” And thirdly, Abraham is a pattern to believers *in the home he looked for*—“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

I. First, dear friends, it should be our anxious desire to imitate Abraham spiritually IN THE MODE OF HIS LIVING. How did he live?

Well, first, he lived as a man *cut off from old associations*. He had dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees, on “the other side of the flood,” as the Scripture says, and he was called to quit his family, his estate, his country, and go to a land which he had never seen, and which God promised ultimately to give to his family to be an inheritance forever. Abraham was not disobedient. He left his country and he journeyed to the land pointed out to him.

Now, dear friends, we are not, as a rule, to leave our friends and kindred. We should be very ungenerous and ungrateful if we did. There may, however, be occasions when even that may have to be done, but we are really to leave our old associations, our unspiritual, sinful, worldly associations and to come right out.

You who are born of Christian parents and live in godly families, do not know much about this coming out, for you are singularly shielded. But there are some here who, if they become Christians, will get

“the cold shoulder” from everybody in the house. A man’s foes will, in their case, be they of his own household. They will have to quit their present business. They will have to cut the connection between them and many ungodly men and women. They will have to come right out from the old kith and kin of their ungodliness and each one of them will have to say, “I am on the Lord’s side.

*“My old companions, fare ye well,
I cannot go with you to hell.”*

Now, Abraham did this and he never went back again, as some do who run away from their old master for a little while, and then go back to his cruel service to their own destruction.

I suppose Abraham was called out from the place where he dwelt, to live a separated life, because his kinsfolk and acquaintances were idolaters. The Lord said to Israel, through Joshua, “Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.”

Abraham must, therefore be taken away from that connection, that he might serve the living and true God. “Nay,” say you, “but when he went to Palestine, he was among idolaters.” Yes, but it is one thing to walk up and down among idolaters, and quite another thing to be in the same family with them. Abraham was safe enough from idolatry when he moved about among the Canaanites and saw their obscene worship. But he was not safe from it in a decent, respectable household like that of his father, where the teraphim were slyly adored, and the worship of false gods was carried on without the disgusting abominations that were common in Canaan.

I think that more people are lost through half-way Christians than through profligates. Men seldom become drunkards through drunkards. They become drunkards through—well, we will say no more about that—you know what I mean. And I do not think that men often learn to grow up dishonest by the example of great thieves, but it comes through imitating people who are thought to be honest, and yet can pilfer. Ah, friends, it is a good thing to get a man right out from the world, even from the best side of it, for the best part of the world is bad enough and complete separation from it, with a deep abyss between it and ourselves, is really necessary for our spiritual health.

Now, the next thing about Abraham was that while he lived away from his country, *he lived in the land of promise*. That was an odd thing, was it not, that he should be a stranger in the land of promise? God had given it to him and to his seed by a covenant of salt, and yet he possessed not a foot of it except what he bought from the sons of Heth for a burying-place. That is all he had.

So, today, in this world, perhaps all that some of you will ever have is about six feet of earth for a burying-place, and yet it is all yours, it is all yours. You are living in the land of promise. “The meek shall inherit the earth.” They that fear the Lord are the true possessors of the world and the day shall come when even this poor world itself, brought into subjection to the Christ of God, shall be ours. Indeed, it is ours already and much more than the world is also ours, as the apostle says, “Things present, or things to come, all are yours.” Abraham was in the land of promise and yet he was a stranger in it.

In this point you must be like him. Regard everything about you as yours and yet consider that you have not anything in actual possession, except that little plot in the cemetery where sleeps one well-beloved and where you, too, shall sleep, unless the Lord shall come. The point to be remembered is that we are to be strangers in this world.

We are not to be mistaken for citizens of this world—we ought to be known to be strangers in it. Abraham never blushed to say, even to the lordly sons of Heth, “I am a stranger and a sojourner with you.” He did not want them to think that he was a Canaanite. I do not know what he would have done if they had fallen into that idea.

Christian people, if you were what you should be, men would know that you did not belong to this ungodly race. You have been redeemed from among men. You have been endowed with a new life to

which they are strangers—and it ought to be apparent in your daily walk and conversation that you seek another country. This world is not your country and never can be.

Why was Abraham made to be a stranger in that country? I think it was that he might be tried and that in the trial graces might be developed which could never have come out else. And you are to be a stranger in the midst of your own friends, that your patience may be tried, that your faith may be exercised, and that your holy longings for the better country may often break out.

Was he not put there, also, that, being absent from home, he might learn to look for it by faith? You are not to be in heaven just yet. It is not the time for you to be there. You are to be absent from heaven that you may long for it, that you may go there with a better appetite. I think a boy who goes to school loves home the better when he comes back for his holidays.

Oh, what a heaven will heaven be to some of God's people who spend the most of their time on a hard bed, made harder by their lying long upon it, and who have none of the comforts of this life, and perhaps, not too much of the comforts of the life to come! One hour with our God will make up for everything we suffer here. But our suffering will go a long way towards making heaven more truly heaven when once we get there.

Abraham was placed in Canaan as a stranger, in this sense, that he had nothing to do with many of the cares that vexed the sons of Heth. Nor have you as a Christian anything to do with the cares that vex the worldling. You ought to have no care to get rich. You are a stranger here—why do you want to heap up the furniture when you are soon going away? You ought not to know the worldings' fret and worry.

They are at home and they may well fret. That house is decaying, this furniture is going out of repair—but what is that to you? It is none of yours. You are only a traveler stopping at the inn and if the place should fall down tomorrow, you will be away. You are on your journey home—you are not a fixture, as these men are—you take but little concern in the things that they are most worried about.

If I go to Mentone, I do not trouble about French politics. I know who is the President of the Republic, but I do not know the name of the great men who sit on his right and on his left hand, and I do not want to know. If I hear anything about politics, I like to know what is being done in my own dear homeland.

So, you Christians, your citizenship is in heaven. As to these things which are down below, you take an interest in them so far as they concern the kingdom of God and the good of your fellow men, but you are no partisan. Why should you be? You are a stranger and a foreigner—and so you keep aloof from party strifes and from those cares and other things of which the men of the world think so much.

I think, also, that Abraham was sent to Canaan as a stranger to be a witness for God. These people were soon to be destroyed, but their iniquity was not yet full, so they had another chance in the living of a man of God, a prophet of God, among them. You, my Christian friend, are a stranger here, and you are living here for the good of those around you. It may be that you may snatch some brand from the burning. Be content to stay if such is the case.

Abraham lived there to show the people what God could do for those who trusted in Him. He was a mere gypsy in the land, moving about with his tent, and yet he came to be the richest man among them. Abraham was very greatly blessed in flocks and in herds, for God took care of him—and I think He did it to say to these Canaanites, "You see, with all your fret, and all your worry, God's servant Abraham gets on better than you do."

So, when the king of Sodom offers Abraham wealth, he grandly says, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and I will not take anything that is yours, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich." Yet the man prospered and by his prosperity he taught men this lesson—that he who trusts in God is no fool. He who trusts in God shall find, even in this life, as far as he is able to bear it, and God thinks fit, that the Lord "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Still, Abraham was, to all intents and purposes, a foreigner in the land that belonged to him, even as you are strangers in a world that belongs to you. And as your Lord came unto His own, and His own

received Him not. And as God Himself is a stranger in the world He made, even as David said to the Lord, “I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.”

To make this point still more clear as to Abraham’s mode of living, I want you to notice that *Abraham lived in tents*. He never erected a house, he built no booths—he simply had his tent, and he pitched it, or shifted it as he moved from place to place. Why was this? What did it mean? Not that you should go in a tent, but that you should feel that everything you have, all round about you, all your possessions, are but frail things and are apt to change.

I know that you begin to look upon that little property as a very sure thing—be not deceived, the only sure thing is your God. You are beginning to look upon your worldly income as pretty certain and you rest upon it. The only thing you may rest upon is the faithful promises of your God. So you think your wife will live? Ah, me! I do not wish to grieve you, but if I could prophesy, I would not tell you how soon she may be taken. You look upon your children as young immortals—but they are not. You will have to bury them or they will have to bury you. All things here pass away.

I cannot tell you the strange joy I felt after the earthquake at Mentone. I had been to see many of the houses that had been shaken down and the two churches that were greatly injured, and I was full of the earthquake. I had quite realized its terrors and its power, and when I went up the stairs of my hotel, I thought, “Well, at any moment this may all come down with a run. When I go to bed, it may all slip away.”

And I felt a great delight in thinking that I actually realized, not in a dream, but as a matter of fact, the shakiness of this poor earthquaky world and how everything in it is without foundation, but is just a mere tent which might come down at any moment—a gust of wind might blow it over. When we are most comfortable in it, we may hear a voice saying, “Up and away. Pack up your tent and journey somewhere else.”

Sit loose by this world, I pray you. Let not your roots strike into this accursed soil. Live here as those who are soon to live there—and tarry here as men who only tarry till the trumpet sounds, “Boot and saddle. Up and away, for this is not your rest.” When we live so, we shall live as Abraham did, and as God would have us live.

II. Now, very briefly, in the next place, we must imitate Abraham IN THE COMPANY HE KEPT—“Dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.”

What a fortunate, nay, what a gracious circumstance it was that Abraham could find the best company in his own neighborhood! There are some men I know that are fine company out of doors, wonderful company, I have heard say, in the bar-parlor, or at a banquet, but they are no company to anybody at home. Short, gruff, sharp barks like a wolf—this is all their family can get out of them. When they are once inside the house, they are not at home. When they are outside, and far away, then they are quite at home.

But here is Abraham, who lives in a tent, and has the happiness of *finding his best company in his own family*. I suppose that he lived with Isaac about seventy-five years. If you calculate, you will find that that is about the time. Did he live with Jacob? Yes, he must have lived at the same time as Jacob for about fifteen years. He saw his dear son Isaac married, and twin children born, and he marked their life long enough to see that Jacob was of that kind that would make a plain man dwelling in tents—and Abraham found the sweetest company with his own dear family.

May the Lord in mercy convert all our children, and their wives, and their children—and may we have a church in a house, as Abraham had a church in a tent! Happy are men who can find their best company at home!

But that is not the point I want to mention. *Abraham dwelt in tents with those like-minded with himself*. We know a man by his company—and a man is blessed or cursed by his company. Abraham dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob—men of the same spirit as himself, quite different men, but men saved by the same grace, men who worshipped the same God, men who lived for the same end, men

who were actuated by the same principles, men who were co-heirs with him of the promised land. This is the company I keep. These are the dearest friends I know.

If you want a merry evening, child of God, get together half-a-dozen who are, like yourself, God's children. If you want an evening that you can look back upon with delight, gather such a company together. Never mind how poor the believers are—perhaps the poorer they are the better it will be, for they will talk more freely with God, often, than some of what we call the better class—the worse class, I have often had to call them.

Children of God, who really have to look to Him for daily bread, are often more full of faith than any other class of society. People of God who know the rough and tumble of the world, those who have stood its hard usage, those who mix from day to day with ungodly men who scoff at them—these are the men who come to God in real earnest. They do not play at religion—they live it. Never mind their station or rank in life. If they are in good favor with God, let them be in good favor with you and make your choicest companions among the people of God.

I have seen some, who call themselves children of God, turn up their noses at God's best people because they did not put their H's in the right places, or they spoiled the Queen's English. Bless the dear souls! If their hearts are right with God, what matters it about the faultiness of their talk? Ah, how often have our souls been carried up to heaven by prayers that violated all the proprieties! And how often have I been made to feel as dull as death by a prayer that was wonderfully beautiful in its wording—cold moonlight, no sunshine—a pretty picture, but no life in it! Give us the life of God and let us get into our tent with Isaac and with Jacob, and there let us find Isaac's God, and Jacob's God, and we shall do well.

Dear young friends, who have lately come to Christ, mind that you keep company with God's people. I do not want you to have a lot of acquaintances to talk to, but have one or two. Perhaps two may be better than one, but one is good enough—one godly Christian to whom you can go and tell your troubles—one older than yourself who has been a little farther on the road than you have been. Talk with such saints, as Jacob probably talked with father Isaac, and Isaac with father Abraham, while they lived together in the same encampment and dwelt in tents.

III. Now, lastly, I wish to say something that may lead your hearts away from this poor, dead, dull world. Let us imitate Abraham IN THE HOME HE LOOKED FOR—"for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Note, first, that *all saints live with an eye beyond time*. You know, the horse and the cow are quite satisfied as long as there is something in the rack or the manger—they make no provision for future months. Young men, when they begin life, often spend in waste all they get and make no provision for old age. We do not commend you for your wisdom if you have done so, but we beg you not only to think of all that may be needed while you are here, but to think also of the hereafter.

Can we live through this transient span of time and never remember that we have to live forever? Can we spend all our time upon time and have no view to eternity? FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS, writ in capital letters, are they who can use this life and never regard it as the hinge upon which must swing the great door of their eternal state. Children of God have an eye to the world to come. They do not live "like dumb, driven cattle," but they think of the changeless state into which death, or Christ's coming, may speedily plunge them—and they live with an eye to that state.

Saints have good reason to live thus. They have not much here, as a rule. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

***"Alas, for us, if thou wert all,
And nought beyond, O earth!"***

Alas, for the believer in God, if all he had could be had here! Surely, we are to be greatly pitied as having missed the grandest end, if this world contains our all.

But it does not contain our all—Christians have a hope beyond the grave. What an awful thing it must be to everyone here who must die, but who has no idea yet of what will become of him, or if down deep in his conscience there is an idea of what it will be—it is “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.”

How can you go home happy? How many die in the streets! How many die in their sleep! I pray you, be not so unconcerned as to be upon the brink of eternal ruin and yet never to think of it. God give you to look beyond the grave and make sure work for eternity!

We are told, here, that *Abraham expected a city*. That is an Inspired description of heaven. On earth Abraham had no city. Lot went away to Sodom to seek a city, that city was burned with fire and brimstone, and Lot barely escaped with his life. Abraham kept to his tents—he knew nothing about city life, but, “he looked for a city.”

Why is heaven called a city? Because it is a place of fellowship where men meet one another. You know, away in the country, there is sometimes a lonely cottage where they only see a man pass once in six weeks. They never even see the postman—they must go to get their letters. Heaven is not like such lonely places. We look upon heaven, not as a spot where there will be half-a-dozen people of our own views and sentiments, but as a great city where there will be a wide fellowship among a multitude that no man can number.

It will be a city for security, within walls that never can be attacked, and with streets where there shall never be known an adversary. Heaven is a city because it is a place of splendor. Countries glorify themselves by the greatness of their cities. There is no city like to the New Jerusalem.

It is a place of store. Cities have great wealth and great accumulations of useful things, which are not found in villages and hamlets. In heaven there is everything that a heart can desire—fruits new and old laid up by the great Lord for His well-beloved.

Heaven is a place of freedom and therefore it is called a city. Men get “the freedom of the city” here, and they are as proud of it as they well can be. But oh, to be liverymen of glory, freemen of the company of the perfect, citizens of the New Jerusalem! This is what we look for. We are looking for a city. We think all this so-called city of London to be but a dissolving view. We count this great country of England to be but like a pack of cards which will soon be knocked over. We reckon the whole world to be but a dream. There is a city and we are looking for it.

The text said that Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations.” *Saints look for something abiding*. Abraham used to pull up the tent pins and his men would take down the big tent pole and roll up the canvas, and they were soon away, always moving about that country with their flocks and herds. The tents had no foundations, but 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. They are all “such stuff as dreams are made of,” and will be gone before long. But we look for a city that has foundations. Eternal love, eternal faithfulness, infinite power, endless bliss, immortal glory make the foundations of the city to which we are now wending our way, where all is peace and joy and nothing can ever disturb it.

When I think of some of our dear friends who are already there, who have gone from this city to the city that has foundations, could I wish them back again? Could you wish them back to all the sorrow and grief of this poor trying life, back to the tent which has been dissolved, now that they have gained “the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”? Nay, beloved, stay where you are! We are hoping soon to join you. We can hear the sound of the coming chariot and we shall soon be with you where Jesus is!

This was Abraham’s way of living, counting everything around him to be no more fixed and settled than an Arab’s tent, and looking for a city which hath foundations.

That city was to have a builder and a maker, as all cities have. Hundreds and thousands of names would have to be mentioned to describe this city of London and to say who the builders and makers of it were. You need not be anxious to know them, for they are not good for much, most of them. The

builders and makers of the streets that we go through had better be forgotten and I think, their houses, too.

But there is a city that is all built by one Builder, it is the city of God. There will be nothing there that is trumpery or temporary—everything there is the best of the best, most suitable for the inhabitants and most glorious to behold. The very streets are paved with gold, exceeding rich and rare. The best builders of earth cannot be compared to the great Builder above, the eternal Architect, the everlasting Freemason who has built those many mansions where His saints shall dwell forever.

I cannot tell you anything about heaven. If I could come back for a while after going there, I would like to come and tell you, but that must not be. You must read this Book and study it. Above all, you must get heaven into your own heart, for you will never have your heart in heaven till you have heaven in your heart. You must have heaven in you before you will be in heaven—and you can learn about heaven by the experiential knowledge of the Word of God, by living near to the Lord, and by an experience of His deep love and His eternal faithfulness. Thus, there is a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Are you going there? Why, there are some of you who have here everything that you own. You are like the man, when the ship was sinking, who had all his property round his waist in pieces of gold—which sank him to the bottom of the sea. Everything that you have is here and it is sinking you down to perdition. As for us who have believed in Christ, we have only a trifle of spending money just to pay the toll-gates on the road—our treasury is up there, on the other side of the river, in the land of the hereafter, on the hilltops of glory, with the ever-blessed—where we hope soon to be.

Saints look for their home at the end of their pilgrimage. When a man goes on a long journey, he likes to have thoughts of his home. How often have I told you how quickly my horses go home! They seem to know when their heads are turned homewards—and away they go. They pull up even the highest of Norwood's hills with all their might because they are going home. They do not go so fast when they are coming here and I do not blame them. They know where there is a good feed for them and a place to lie down in—and even a horse goes best with his head towards home. Come, beloved, our heads are towards home, as many of us as believe in Jesus! We do not want to be lashed as we go up the everlasting hills. We will pull against the collar with all our might to get home as soon as we can.

Oh, but I wish you were all going with us. I wish you were all going the way that leads to the city that has foundations. Trust Christ. Trust Christ. He is the Way. Come out from the world. Lead the separated life. Live upon an unseen God and as surely as there is a God in heaven, you shall be in heaven in His good time, for He will never leave one believer outside in the cold.

God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

HEBREWS 11:1-21

This is the triumphal arch of faith. Here we find the names of many of the heroes of faith and a brief record of some of the battles in which they fought and conquered. May you and I possess “like precious faith” as that of which we have here the story! We cannot enter heaven without it. We cannot fight our way through the world without it.

Verse 1. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,*
It gets a grip of what it hopes for and holds it in its hand.

1. *The evidence of things not seen.*

We see by faith. We see by faith what cannot be seen by our eyes. We grasp by faith what cannot be grasped with our hands. A strange mystery is the simple act of faith.

2. *For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

All the godly of the olden time had a good report of God and of holy men as the result of their faith.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

They were not evolved out of something else that existed before—evolution is a rank lie against revelation. The worlds were not made, not one of them was made, out of something pre-existent, but they were framed by the Word of God, and the things which are seen were not made of things which are seen.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,*

He was a better man than Cain and his offering was a better offering than Cain's was. But at bottom here was the difference between the two brothers—Abel had faith and Cain had none. It was “by faith” that “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” presented.

4. *By which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

What wondrous faith this is! Here is a dead man speaking. Here is a man who is slain by his brother, yet the one who is killed receives the approbation of God.

5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death;*

Faith has conquered death, itself, or else avoided it. There is scarcely anything which faith cannot do, for faith ranks itself on the side of the omnipotent God, and becomes all but omnipotent. “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.”

5-6. *And was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,*

He cannot come to a God who to his own mind is non-existent. He must believe that He is.

6. *And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

You must believe that God hears prayer. You must believe that He will punish the guilty and that He will reward the righteous. Without this sure faith, you cannot come to Him.

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house;*

You see, faith and fear can live in the same heart—and they can work together to build the same ark. Faith and fear are very sweet companions, when the fear is filial fear, a holy dread of disobeying God. When we are moved with that fear, our faith becomes practical.

7-8. *By the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed;*

He did not hesitate to leave his family, to leave his property, to leave his country, but he obeyed—“when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance.”

8. *And he went out, not knowing where he went.*

Faith puts her hand into God's hand and follows where He leads, with sweet contentment, knowing that, if she cannot see, God can, and He will not lead us wrong. Do you not remember that hymn that our Brother Chamberlain sings so sweetly?

*“So on I go—not knowing, I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God, than go alone in the light;
I'd rather walk by faith with Him, than go alone by sight.
Where He may lead, I'll follow, My trust in Him repose:
And every hour in perfect peace I'll sing, 'He knows! He knows!'”*

9-10. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

There have been many here in this house of prayer who have looked for this city and they have gone to it. Others of us sit waiting here till our Lord's dear hand shall beckon us and His voice shall say, "Come up higher." We are looking for the city. Keep looking, beloved, there is nothing here worth looking for, but look for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

11. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

And this holy woman is enrolled among these saintly ones. Her faith was not all it ought to have been, but God saw that it was true faith, and He loved it, and He wrote the record of it.

12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

This is true, literally, of Abraham's seed according to the flesh. It is also true in a spiritual sense, for he is "the father of all them that believe," and they are a multitude whom no man can number.

13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,

What long arms faith has! The promises are afar off and yet faith embraces them tonight. Embrace the promises, dear friends, and stretch out your hands by faith to hands that have gone before.

*"E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before;
And greet the blood-sprinkled bands
On the eternal shore."*

13. And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

They not only were strangers and pilgrims, but they confessed it. Confessed faith is requisite. Oh, you who, like Nicodemus, come to Christ by night, be ashamed that you are ashamed—and come out and boldly confess what you are!

14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

They were strangers and pilgrims here, and they sought a country elsewhere. Every man needs a country and if we have not one beneath the stars, we seek it somewhere else.

15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

Ah, but God's people are not mindful of that country from whence they came out! They have opportunity to return, but they have no wish to return. May God's grace always keep any of you from turning back, for it is to turn back unto perdition. Your faces are heavenward today—keep them so. Remember the doom of any that apostatize. It is impossible, "if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." "If the salt has lost its savour, with what shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Lord, keep Your servants! Hold us up and we shall be safe.

16. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

They are not ashamed to be called God's people, and He is not ashamed to be called their God. They are looking for a city and He has prepared a city for them. Evidently He and they are well agreed. They want a heaven and He is preparing heaven for them, and preparing them for heaven.

17-19. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

This was one of the grandest achievements of faith. It was also a figure or type of God's offering up His well-beloved Son almost on the same spot.

20-21. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

The staff which had helped him so often in his early pilgrimage, the staff on which he leaned when he came back from the place of his wrestling, halting on his thigh. He leaned on it as he sat upright on his death couch and pronounced the parting blessing.

So, you see, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all lived by faith and did their works by faith, and distributed blessings to their children by faith. Friend, have you this faith, or have you not? If you have it, you are blessed among men, blessed among women. If you have it not, what hope is there for you either in this life or in eternity?

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—658, 866, 875

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