

**I Press On.** . . . . . 17 January 2010  
Hebrews 11:8-16 1001992

These study notes are prayerfully prepared and provided to aid, not replace,  
your personal study of God’s inspired, precious Word.

A bumper sticker said, “*When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade.*” There are along life’s way those situations that hit us that make us think that life has dumped a whole load of lemons in our lap. Doubt, frustration, loss of confidence may even take over in those times. We feel like the old cartoon that asked, “*How do I keep the elephants off my airhose!*”

There are three things that happen that can produce such doubting, or lack of faith:

When things happen that we think should never happen.

When things we think **should** never happen do happen.

When things we think **should happen now**, happen much, much later.

Remember again the verses that set the stage, that show the purpose of the writer in this great chapter 11. It’s found in Hebrews 6:11, 12: “*And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*”

As the writer of the book of Hebrews proceeds through the documentation of examples of “*hanging tough*” kind of faith. He takes us to yet another example of the Heroes of Faith, people who endured and did not shrink back.

The writer settles in for several verses on Abraham. Abe’s experience provides us with a glimpse into to living faith with a “*heavenly-minded*” mindset (remember Colossians 3:2). Facing tests, waiting, endurance and faith rewarded. His life parallels the life struggles we all face.

The writer reminds us to PRESS ON God’s way. We are all aware of the advice, “*Hang in there,*” or “*keep on keeping on*”. Paul reminds us that he pressed always on toward the mark. But practically, how do you do that especially when circumstances seem to be so contrary to that? Abraham gives us a real flesh and blood example. He is a common man who believed God even through he was hard-pressed to explain how and when things would work out like they were supposed to. He gives us valuable insight into “*pressing on*” God’s way! We’ve already been introduced to the requirements of faith, in Hebrews 11:6.

Heb 11:6 The requirements of faith. Remember in that key verse of last study, faith requires:  
We must actively come to God (submission) in complete dependence on Him (humility)  
and complete availability to Him (surrender).

We must have a steadfast confidence that He exists (is present).

We trust Him to keep His word in His time, in His way, to His glory.

Now let’s look at the example of Abraham.

Heb 11:8-10 **The Example of Abraham.**

Abraham obeyed when he was called. The word “*obey*” means to hear under, to listen, to do what a superior says, when He says it, the way He says it, how He says it, as long as He says it because He says it.

By faith, Abraham took God at His word and did what God said. He went out to land which he was to inherit, not knowing where. He lived as an alien (one who has no permanent home) in a strange land.

He fixed his eyes, not on temporary, earthly tents, but on the eternal, heavenly city, planned by an architect and built by a builder – namely, by GOD!

***Qualities of One Who Presses On.***

Heb 11:8 *Submissive obedience.* Abraham obeyed God’s call to leave with a map to nowhere. Now look at verse 9.

11:9 *Faithful perseverance.* He lived as an alien in a foreign land, dwelling in tents, willing to remain in God’s groove!

Two frogs fell into a can of cream, or so I’ve heard it told.  
The sides of the can were shiny and steep,  
The cream was deep and cold.  
“Oh, what’s the use?” croaked number one, “Tis fate, no help’s around.  
Goodby my friend! Goodbye, sad world!” And weeping still, he drowned.  
But number two, of sterner stuff, dog-paddled in surprise.  
The while he wiped his creamy face, and dried his creamy eyes.  
“I’ll swim awhile at least,“ he said, or so I’ve heard he said.  
“It really wouldn’t help the world, if one more frog were dead”  
An hour or two, he kicked and swam, not once he stopped to mutter.  
But kicked and kicked and swam and kicked, then hopped on via butter!

A teen decided he was going to quit high school His father tried to convince him to stay with it. “Son,” he said,”you just can’t quit. All the people who are remembered in history didn’t quit: Abe Lincoln, he didn’t quit; Thomas Edison, he didn’t quit; Douglas MacArthur, he didn’t quit; Babe Ruth struck out over 1300 times, but he didn’t quit; Elmo McCringle...” The son interrupted, “Elmo McWHO?” Who’s he? “See,” the father replied, “you don’t remember him. He quit!”

But Abraham kept on, for he was looking beyond the circumstances, to the very promise of God. And then note verse 11.

11:11 *He was fruitful in God’s time.* At a time 25 years after his call, he saw the fruit and the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise. Recall the description of the Godly, righteous man in Psalm 1:2,3.

Submissive obedience, faithful perseverance, and fruitfulness in God’s timing. But we may have a tendency to think, “That’s Abraham, the friend of God, a spiritual giant”. Wait a moment, Abraham did not live a life of spiritual highs all the time. The greatest event in his life was the birth of Isaac, otherwise he had just a “*hum-drum*” existence, day-to-day life just like you and me. Notice he faced some “*lemons*” along the way, too. A member of the track team I coached 35 years ago said, “*Coach, life is much like running the hurdles, you know. About the time you clear one, you see another coming.*”

***Hurdles to overcome as we press on.***

Heb 11:8 The *challenge of the unknown.* Abraham took off on a trip without a “*triptik*”. He did not know where he was going. Often we do not know exactly what is ahead – in that

report from the doctor, the results of that upcoming meeting with the boss, that test coming up next week – that’s the challenge of the unknown.

Heb 11:10,11 The *challenge of the humanly impossible*. Abraham was 75 years old when God gave him the promise, and Sarah was no spring chicken herself! Yet, Abraham believed God! Listen, “*If all I ever do is humanly explainable, how will anyone know that there is a God?*” If Abe and Sarah had a child at a normal age, everyone would say, oh, that’s just normal. Nothing special about that! Remember, God is a specialist in the impossible!

*“It is the very time for faith to work, when sight ceases. The greater the difficulties, the easier for faith. As long as there remains certain natural prospects, faith does not get on even as easily...as when all natural prospects fail”* George Mueller, in *GEORGE MUELLER OF BRISTOL*, p. 437.

Heb 11:13 The *challenge of the lack of visible results*. There was no instant feedback for Abe. Each day he could see Sarah was not pregnant! There did not seem to be the answer to the fulfilling of the promise.

Heb 11:15 The *challenge of the ‘good ole days’*.  
The lure of the past, its seeming comforts, and ease and simplicity! It would have been easy for Abe to turn around, leave that desert and famine, and land of enemies, and return to the luxury of the city of Ur, and the “*good ole days*.”

But Abe did not give in to the unknown, the humanly impossible, the lack of visible results, or the good ole days. He stands as an example of faith – are you listening – did you notice, v. 8, v. 9, v. 11, v. 15 BY FAITH. We see in Abe and the others documented in Hebrews 11, the recipe for walking by faith.

Recipe for Walking by Faith.

Now remember, faith involves the

- intellect* (understand the truth),
- the *emotion* (conviction that it is true!)

And the *will* (consent to the truth). (Larry Moyer, EvanTell).

Here are the ingredients of a “*pressing-on-faith*” as seen in Abraham’s experiences:

Heb 11:13 ***Vision***. Abraham had the bigger picture. He was looking beyond the present circumstances and pleasure to eternal values.

A little five-year old was frightened as lightning flashed and thunder cracked just as she was stepping out of her evening bath. The lights began flickering as she was putting on her pajamas. She remembered the time the lights had gone out and they had to light candles. She asked if she could sleep in Mommy and Daddy’s room because of the storm. Before kissing her Mommy and Daddy goodnight, she prayed, “*Dear God, I hope it doesn’t thunder, and I hope the lights don’t go out.*” She paused a moment and continued, “*But I thought it over, and you can do what you want. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*” Wow, what a beautiful way to say, “*Thy will be done!*”

Heb 11:14 ***Pursuit***. Abraham was seeking, that is pursuing a living relationship with God. (Cf. Phil 3:14). “*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward all of God in Christ Jesus.*”

Heb 11:15     ***Abandonment.*** Abraham willingly released his earthly goals and pleasures. His thoughts and his goals were like Paul expressed in Phil 3:10. “*More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.*”

Heb 11:16     ***Desire.*** He was desiring, that is stretching himself, deeply yearning for a godly lifestyle. Peter reminds us we are to BE HOLY, even as God is Holy. We must desire, then, to grow from His Word and in relationship with Him.

As a footnote, note that when Abraham was called on to sacrifice his only son, the one he had waited for so long, it is said “***he considered that God was able. . . to raise his son from the dead!***” (Heb 11:19).

Where there is faith, there is love. Where there is love, there is peace. Where there is peace there is God. Where there is God, there is no need!

*Lingering Pressing On Lessons:*

We must come to God humbly, that is, in submission to, in total dependence upon, and complete availability to HIM.

We must believe that He is There – that He exists and IS GOD.

We must take Him as one who keeps His Word, He does what He says He will do. And of these NO MATTER WHAT.

Read with me. “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are mature, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by the same standard to which we have attained.” Phil 3: 14-16.

I PRESS ON, GOD’S WAY.