

May 2, 2021 - Week #17 of 21

Jesus is Greater – A Study of the Book of Hebrews

Sermon Title: Living by Faith, Waiting for Sight

Main Passage: Hebrews 11:1-40 (lot of text!!)

Darth Vader: I find your lack of faith disturbing

Many people believe God looks at us this same way.

Today, we will be looking at faith. Throughout the bible we learn that the object of our faith (JESUS!) is far more important the quantity or quality of our individual faith.

Additionally, we'll look at how faith impacted more than a dozen different people. We'll notice how faith, at times, looks very mundane; other times it's utterly astounding. We'll see how faith brings times of blessing but also times of suffering. Given the varied ways faith is experienced, we'll ask and answer the question, "What is God calling us to as people of faith?"

An outline of today's passage:

1. Read text. This would be a great time to pull out a bible, if you have one close by. In my powerpoint, it is observed that some text is lighter (bolded in these notes below). Those are more universal truths which can be widely applied. The text that is darker are singular examples of faith, exclusive to the person being described.
2. Review the universal statements. How is faith described in those verses?
3. Make observations regarding faith within the singular examples.
4. Proclaim faith is chiefly about turning our gaze toward Christ.

#1 – Read the text.

Hebrews 11:1–40

¹ **Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.** ²

This is what the ancients were commended for. ³ **By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.** ⁴ By

faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. ⁵

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶ **And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**

⁷ By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith. 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. 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. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who

had made the promise. 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. 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, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ **People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.** ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” ¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death. ²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones. ²³ By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. ²⁹ By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days. ³¹ By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. ³² And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. ³⁵ Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. ³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. ³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰ **since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.**

#2 – How is faith universally described?

¹ Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Verse 1 – This verse does not make faith expressly Christian. Many people can live by faith if ONLY verse 1 is mentioned. Nevertheless, this verse is important in illustrating the confidence/assurance and hope for/invisibility aspects of faith.

Re: confidence/assurance // “Faith is the soul’s entirely embracing the revelation of Jesus Christ as our Savior.”

Re: hope for/don’t see // What the people in this chapter hoped for and did not see is DIFFERENT than what we hope for and do not see. WE SEE THE CROSS!!

³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Verse 3 – Faith tied to seeing God as Creator. Do you believe the universe was formed at God’s command?

How might you verify whether or not you believe this?

Let me ask you a question, “Do you appreciate and thank God for his creation? Do you appreciate and thank God for how he made you??” See: Romans 1:21

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Verse 6 – Faith is the way we express to God that (1) we believe he exists / he’s alive / he is Lord and (2) this has implications (“he rewards...”)!!!

American scholar, Jaroslav Pelikan – If Christ is risen, nothing else matters. And if Christ has not risen, nothing else matters.

Scottish minister, Robertson “If the resurrection is true, everything has changed.”

¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.

11:14 ”Such things” comes from “acknowledging we are strangers and exiles on the earth”

People of faith live in and amongst this world. We care for our neighbors. We seek justice in the public square. We serve those in need. We pray for those who are hurting. And ALL THE WHILE we look ahead. We look to a future. We look to our TRUE HOME which awaits us.

⁴⁰ since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

They would be made perfect together with us. This brings Christ into the picture of chapter 11.

We do NOT make ourselves perfect. It is not as though God sees your faith or my faith and declares perfect. It's not the quantity or quality of faith in us. It's not as though he finds our lack of faith disturbing.

Rather he sees the life and death of Jesus and declares "PERFECT!"

¹⁴ For by one sacrifice – The Sacrifice of Jesus - he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

[*The New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 10:14.

It's much more critical that Jesus is the object, the aim, the focal point of our worship. Why? Because he IS perfect. His life, death, and resurrection were perfect. His sacrifice was perfect. His intercession for you and me today is perfect. It's critical that – regardless of how faith-filled or faith-empty you feel today – that you direct yourself toward Jesus.

#3 – Observations regarding faith (given the singular examples found in chapter 11)

Faith can look like blessing.

But faith can look like suffering.

Blessing – conquered kingdoms, administered justice, gained what was promised, escaped the edge of the sword

Suffering – Abel lost his life, Moses was mistreated along with the people of God, people of faith were tortured, jeered, flogged, imprisoned, stoned, killed.

Faith can look oddly specific.

But faith can look vague and general.

Oddly specific – "Noah, build that boat." "Abraham, go to that country." "Abraham, take your son up that mountain for a sacrifice." "March around the walls of that city." How many times? "SEVEN!"

Vague and general – In faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. By faith, Jacob blessed each of Joseph's sons and worshiped. (oddly specific...as he leaned on the top of his staff)

Faith can look crazy and astounding.

But faith can look mundane and responsible.

Crazy and astounding – Enoch didn't experience death. Sarah had a child after surpassing child-bearing age. The sea opened up and they walked through. Faith was the cause that quenched the fury of the flames. Women received back their dead, raised to life again.

Mundane and responsible – Abraham lived in a tent as did his kids. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and holes in the ground. A WAITING PEOPLE: They were still living by faith when they died (v. 13).

#4 – Faith is about turning our gaze toward Christ

Foreshocks: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses
Earthquake: Jesus

Just a few examples from today's passage:

- The blood of Abel
- Enoch unable to experience death
- Noah as an heir of righteousness
- Abraham as a wanderer, as an exile
- Sarah bringing life where there was no life
- Abraham to sacrifice his son
- Moses, in infancy, being spared from death
- Also receiving disgrace for the sake of Christ
- The Passover and application of blood
- God's people spared and the enemies being thwarted
- Who makes perfect? Jesus!!

Hebrews 12:1–3

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

From: Jesus I My Cross Have Taken

*Haste thee on from grace to glory
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer
Heavens eternal days before thee
God's own hand shall guide us there
Soon shall close thy earthly mission
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days
Hope shall change to glad fruition
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise*

Gospel application to consider: Will we fix our eyes on (and have faith in) Jesus so we will not grow weary and lose heart (until faith becomes sight)?

I FIND YOUR LACK OF FAITH

A close-up shot of Darth Vader from Star Wars, looking slightly to the right with a serious expression. He is wearing his iconic black helmet and armor. The background is a dark, metallic interior with some light fixtures.

DISTURBING



SORRY, YOUR EXCELLENCY, WE DON'T
HAVE THAT GEORGE MICHAEL ALBUM
IN STOCK.

I FIND YOUR LACK
OF "FAITH" ...
DISTURBING.

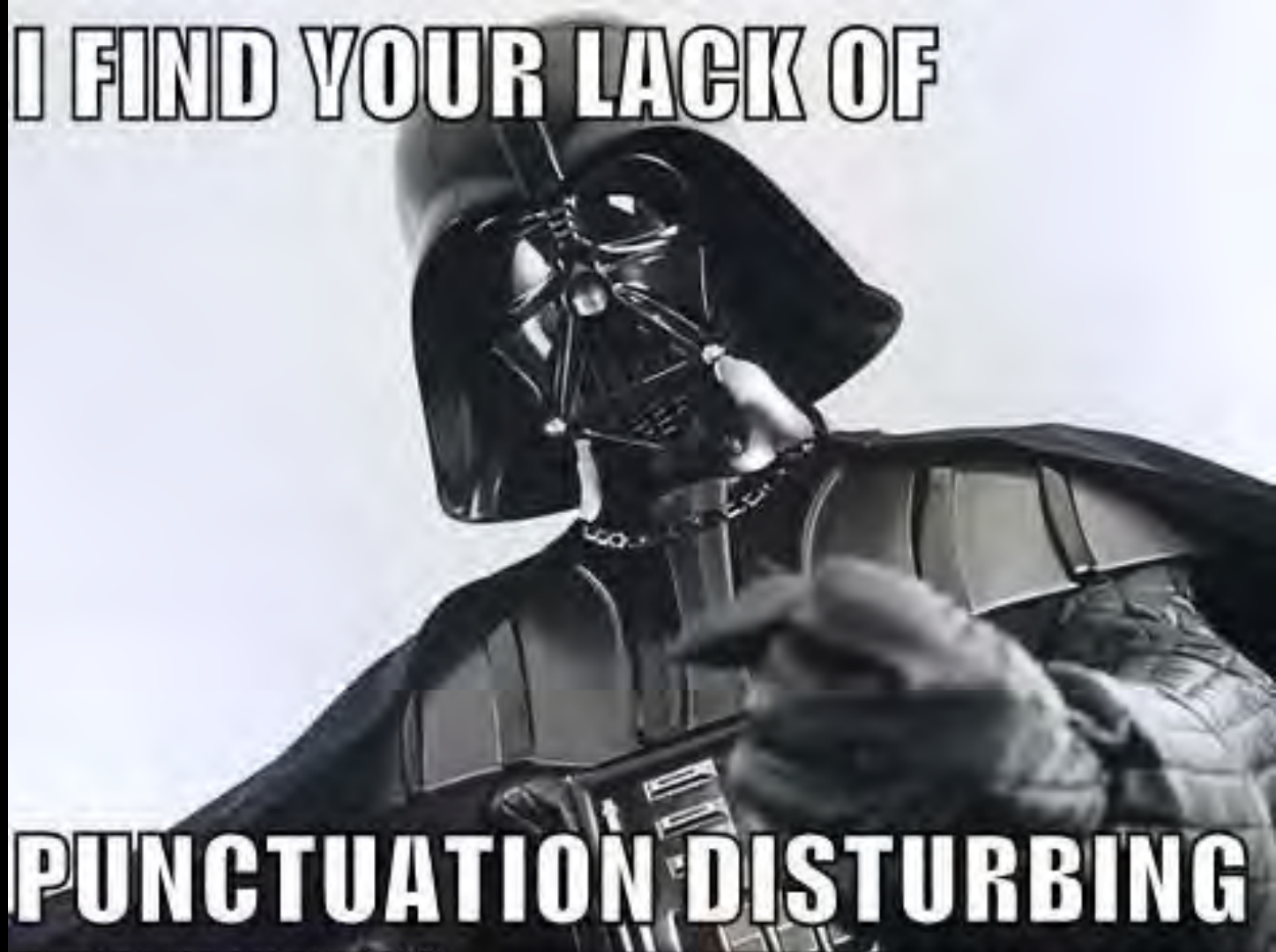


17
DAN
FROM

MOPPET'S TALE

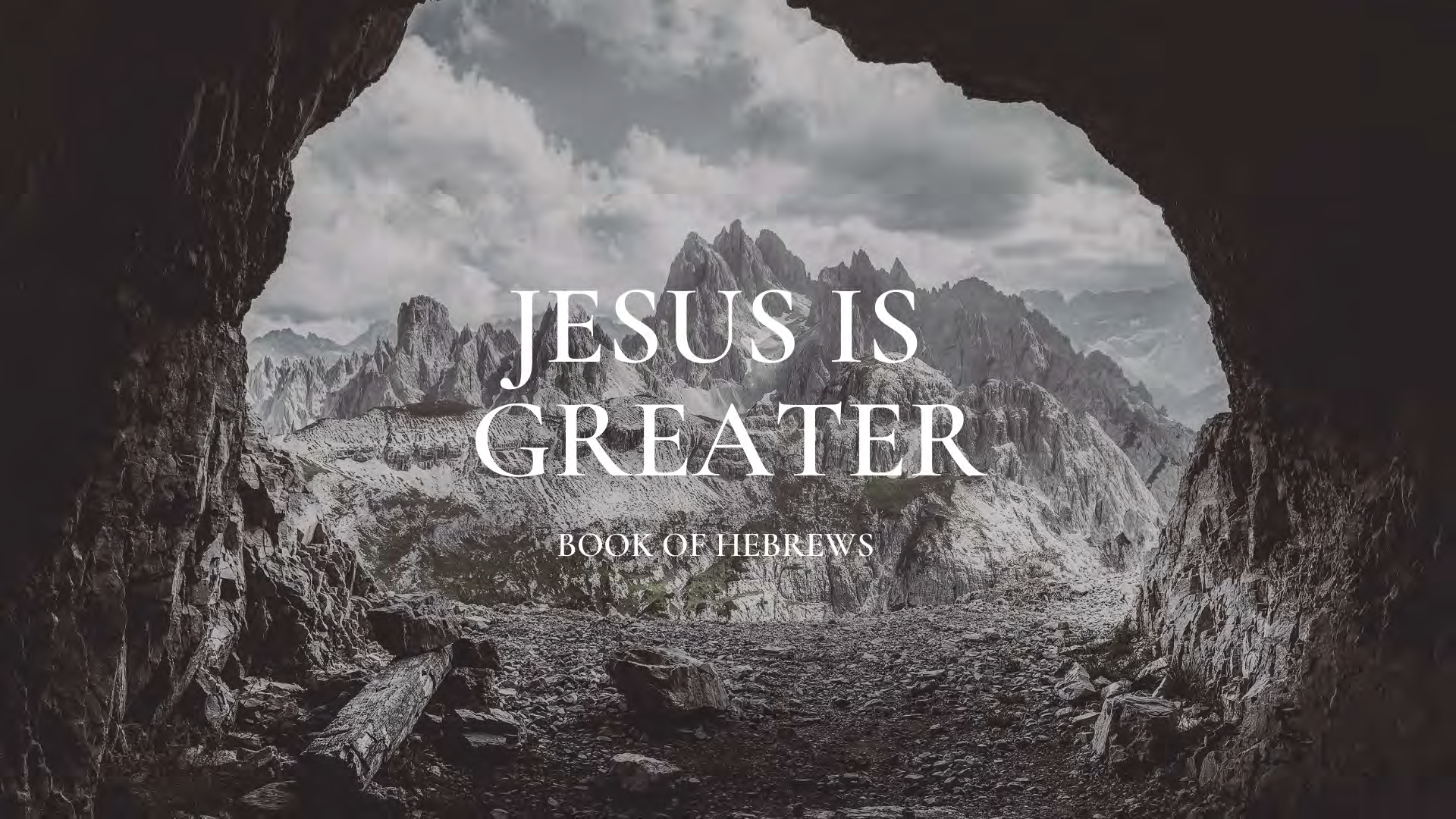
I FIND YOUR LACK OF

PUNCTUATION DISTURBING



**My mom: There are too many grocery bags.
We'll have to take two trips to
get them all inside the house.**

13-year-old Me, loading 12 grocery bags onto each arm:

A black and white photograph of a mountain range viewed through a cave opening. The text "JESUS IS GREATER" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, serif font. Below it, in a smaller, white, serif font, is the text "BOOK OF HEBREWS". The scene is framed by the dark, jagged rock of the cave entrance, leading the eye to a vast, rugged mountain landscape under a cloudy sky. The foreground is filled with rocks and debris, suggesting a path or a natural opening in the rock.

JESUS IS GREATER

BOOK OF HEBREWS

An outline of today's message

1

Read text. Lighter font is universal. Darker font is singular.

2

Review those universal statements. How is faith described in those verses?

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Hebrews 11:1-40

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For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. ⁷ By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith. 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.

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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. ¹⁰

For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. 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.

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Faith to sight, and prayer to praise

Will we fix our eyes on (and have faith in) Jesus so we will not grow weary and lose heart (until faith becomes sight)?