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Trust, Tents, and a Better City

Hebrews 11:8-16

Introduction

a. Good morning everyone, welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni. I'm glad you're here with us this morning, either in person or joining us online. Before we get started let's go ahead and release the children to their Sunday school classrooms. For those of you visiting or joining us for the first time this morning, my name is Kevin Pulley and I'm one of the elders here at Calvary Chapel Iwakuni. Pastor Glenn and about 20 or so other people from the church are currently ministering in the Philippines right now, so you're stuck with me this morning.

b. Last week Glenn preached on [Hebrews 11:1-7](#), focusing on what it means to have true faith. He explained that faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen—trusting in God's promises even when there's no visible proof. Glenn walked us through examples from the Old Testament, showing how Abel's faith led him to offer a better sacrifice, how Enoch's faith allowed him to walk so closely with God that he was taken without seeing death, and how Noah's faith moved him to build the ark despite no sign of the coming flood. The main point was that real faith isn't just believing in God but actively trusting Him, even when we don't have all the answers.

c. With that in mind, turn with me in your bibles to Hebrews chapter 11. We're going to pick right up where Glenn left off, in verse 8. If you don't have a bible with you this morning, we have some underneath the chairs that you're more than welcome to borrow to follow along with us this morning. If you prefer to use a bible app on your phone that's cool too; we'll also have all the texts up here on the TV screens. Once you've made your way to [Hebrews 11](#), if you're able I'd like to invite you to stand so we can all read the word of God together. We're going to be starting in verse 8 and reading down through verse 16. I'll be using and reading from the ESV this morning, let's read the text together:

d. [Hebrews 11:8-12](#) "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him



of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." Verse 13: "These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 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 for them a city." Let's pray.

e. Father, You're the God who called Abraham out of Ur, who sustained Sarah through her doubts, who promised a city that stands forever. Thank You for Your word today—sharp, alive, speaking to us strangers right where we stand. Open our ears to hear Your call, our hearts to trust Your voice, and our eyes to see the home You're building For us. Guide us through these verses this morning—teach us to step out in faith, to live light in this heavy world, and to hope in Your unshakable promise. Be with us now, Lord, as we seek You together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

f. You may take your seats. While you are all getting settled in; I'd like to ask you something. Do you ever feel like you're just passing through—like you're a stranger in your own story? I know a lot of you are military families, or military adjacent families, myself included. I'm sure some of you here have done numerous PCS moves, from base to base or air station to air station; stateside to overseas, Okinawa up to the main land, and all the other possibilities in between. Those of you with kids I'm sure are very used to them asking, 'Do we have to move again?'; all while the moms are all wondering if the movers accidentally packed their sanity in their household goods. Life's got a way of making us feel unmoored, doesn't it? Like we're pitching a tent in the middle of a typhoon, the stakes pulling loose before you can even blink. We've all felt it. That ache when the PCS orders hit, and you're calculating how much of your savings account you're going to burn through eating out almost every night while you wait for your household goods to show up. Or even when your household goods do show up and you have all your pots and pans and you go to the commissary to get that one special ingredient, that they don't sell out in town, with the hopes to make a special home cooked meal for your family; wanting to give them a little sense of home in a foreign country — and yet again— there's a sign on the empty aisle of the commissary that says there's a delay in the shipping, no sour cream for the next three weeks. So your supper plans are completely ruined. The meal you promised your kids, who have grown tired of eating 7/11 for every meal, isn't going to happen anymore. That restlessness stirring inside, that sense of not belonging—it's bigger than delayed dairy shipments or another PCS move. C.S. Lewis captures it in his book Mere Christianity. He writes: 'If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most

probable explanation is that I was made for another world.' That ache you feel is no fluke—it's a sign we're shaped for a purpose unfolding, a kingdom breaking through even now.

g. Take heart: we're not alone in that. This morning we're going to talk a little bit about a man named Abraham, who lived thousands of years ago in a city named Ur—a steady city with everything Abraham could need or want. Then God drops the ultimate TDY orders on him. [Hebrews 11:8](#) lays it out: 'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.' Abraham had no map, no Newcomers PCS packet, just a voice: 'Pack up, trust me, I've got a place.' And Abraham goes—he swaps brick for a tent, trusting the One who called.

h. That's the pulse of our text this morning. It's about Abraham, Sarah, their family—people like us, strangers in a world that wasn't theirs. They lived in tents, not clinging to earthly cities, trusting God's promise even when the horizon was unclear. They looked forward to a better city—one God is building through His people, a Kingdom advancing here and now, not just far off. C.S. Lewis was right—we've got a desire this world can't touch, and it's pointing us there. Maybe you're feeling that stranger vibe this morning—uprooted from a big bustling city back in the states to the country side of Iwakuni, or you're waiting for your spouse to come back from their TDY after weeks or at times months away. Good news: that's not a load that we are to carry alone. It's a signal, a longing for a home God's got in hand.

i. We're all strangers here, setting up camp in a world that's not built to last. But God's got a better city—a kingdom advancing through us and a place where the orders don't change, and stakes hold firm. So here's what we're doing today. We're walking through [Hebrews 11:8-16](#), step by step, to see how faith makes strangers like us whole. If you're taking notes this morning the title of my message is Trust, Tents, and a Better City. We're going to be making three stops along the way: the first one is The Sovereign Call: Faith Steps Out in Trust—stepping out when God calls, even when it's foggy. The second stop I've titled "The Sovereign Sustaining: Faith Longs for a True home, that's our tents—living lightly when the world weighs us down. And our final stop is The Sovereign Hope: Faith Confesses a Better Country,—hoping in a home God's prepared for us, a better city. It's not just Abraham's story—it's our story. Maybe you're tired of feeling out of place. Maybe you're worn from chasing a stability this world can't deliver. That's okay. You're not lost—you're just not home yet. So let's hear what God's got for strangers like us.

I. The Sovereign Call: Faith Steps Out in Trust (vv. 8-9)

a. Let's kick this off where faith always begins—with a step. [Hebrews 11:8-9](#) lays it out clear, read it again with me: 'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.' That's our first stop today: trust. Faith steps out under God's sovereign call, even when the horizon's blank and the ground's unsteady.

b. Picture Abraham in Ur—a bustling city on the Euphrates, alive with merchants, mud-brick homes, and the hum of a rooted life. He's got family, land, a future he can touch. Then God speaks. No preamble, no fanfare, just a command from [Genesis 12:1](#): 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you.' [Hebrews 11:8](#) cuts to the core: 'He obeyed... not knowing where he was going.' No landmarks, no timeline, no heads-up about the terrain. Abraham hears, and he moves—rounds up Sarah, the livestock, the whole crew, and walks out of Ur into nothing but God's word. Verse 9 keeps it going: he hits Canaan, the promised land, but he's not putting down roots. He's 'living in tents' with Isaac and Jacob—nomads in their own inheritance, trusting a promise they can't yet grasp.

c. This isn't Abraham summoning some steel resolve out of thin air—it's not about him muscling up the will to march. No, God's the one driving this story. He's the voice that calls, the hand that stirs the soul, the source who gifts the faith to obey. That same sovereign call now empowers us to extend His Kingdom across the earth. You hear it ringing in [Ephesians 2:8](#): "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." Abraham's not the hero here—God is. He speaks, He directs, He promises, and obedience spills out when that voice lands. For Abraham, it meant trading Ur's sturdy walls for Canaan's flapping tents—not because he had a roadmap or a burning bush every mile, but because God said, "Go," and that was enough. No questions, just steps. Trust isn't easy when the next mile's a blur—when you can't see past the dust on your sandals. But that's faith's footing: not in the details panning out, but in the One giving the orders, the One who's faithful when the path isn't clear.

d. That's where William Carey steps into the frame—his story's a gritty mirror to Abraham's, worth lingering over. It's 1792, and Carey's 31, a cobbler hunched over boots in a dim Northamptonshire shop, the air sharp with leather and sweat. He's got Dorothy, his wife, three small kids—Felix, William Jr., little Lucy—crowded in a cottage where the stove barely glows, shillings stretched thin. But Carey's not just stitching soles—he's got Scripture open, maps of India sprawled across his workbench, tracing rivers he's never seen. [Matthew 28:19](#) sears his heart: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." He's no preacher, no scholar, he has no bankroll—he's just a man with a

call that won't quit. At a ministers' meeting in Kettering, on October 2, 1791, he stands, voice trembling, urging the brethren to send missionaries, William says: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." An older pastor, John Ryland Sr., cuts back, "Young man, sit down. When God wants the heathen saved, He'll do it without your help or mine." Carey doesn't blink—he's heard God's voice, and like Abraham, he's stepping out, no matter the haze.

e. So in 1793, he moves—he drags his family aboard a ship bound for Bengal. They spend five months at sea then they eventually land in Calcutta on November 11—humid air slaps their faces, chaos swirls, a stranger's world of rickshaws and rice paddies. No welcome—just mosquitoes buzzing and a language barrier separating the Carey family from everyone else like a wall. Seven years grind by—Carey toils as a missionary, an indigo planter, a teacher—but there's no converts, just loss. Dorothy's mind unravels; his youngest son born in India Peter dies, just two years old, buried in swampy soil. Carey keeps going—he learns Bengali syllable by syllable, translates the Bible with ink-stained hands, builds a printing press from scratch, wood creaking as he turns it. By 1834, when he dies at 72, thousands in India follow Christ—churches rise, schools flourish, and Bibles spread in every tongue he mastered—all because he trusted God's call over the darkness, faith moving when sight failed. Like Abraham leaving Ur, Carey stepped out—not knowing where, but knowing Who—and God built a nation from his trust.

f. C.S. Lewis gives us another lens in his book *The Silver Chair* from the *Chronicles of Narnia* series—and it's [Hebrews 11:8](#) with a lion's mane. Jill, a schoolgirl from England, finds herself in Narnia, standing on the edge of a cliff—mist swirling, a sheer drop behind her. Before her stands Aslan, the great Lion—golden fur rippling, eyes fierce, voice deep as thunder. He gives her a mission: "You must journey out of my country to find the lost prince... I lay on you four signs to guide you, and I will be with you always." Jill is terrified, Lewis writes that "She was dreadfully afraid, and Jill says to Aslan: 'I was wondering—I mean—could there be some mistake? I'm alone, I don't know the way.'" She has no map, no supplies—just a cliff and a call. Aslan's reply cuts through the fear: "You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you." She steps off—falls—and lands safely in Narnia, where she begins the journey. That's Abraham. Called out of Ur, no clear map in hand, no knowledge of Canaan's shape—just the voice of God. And that was enough. Faith doesn't hinge on seeing the path ahead—it hinges on the One who speaks.

g. God's call is sovereign, and it's yours—personal, unshakable. You don't need to see tomorrow's shore to trust the voice speaking today. Abraham didn't chart Canaan's rivers before leaving Ur—he simply heard God's "Go," raw and real, and that was enough. William Carey didn't wait for financial security before stepping onto the boat; his family wavered, but his faith held. Jill didn't demand a map—Aslan's roar was enough. Faith doesn't grip a blueprint—it clings to the One who

calls. And that same voice that sent them sends you. You are not drifting. You are held. His word steadies you, just as it steadied them, calling you out of the fog into something sure.

h. But faith doesn't just listen—it moves. God calls us to forgive when it stings, to serve when it's thankless, to pray when the weight feels crushing. Abraham didn't argue—he went, dust rising behind him, because God said "Go." So what's your "go"? Where is He nudging you—no safety net, no clear plan, just His voice? Trust walks—not because it's easy, but because He is faithful. His word anchors when the world is all wind. But stepping out is just the beginning. Faith doesn't stop at the first stride—it plants itself, pitches a tent, and holds firm for the long haul.

i. So Abraham steps out of Ur, dust still clinging to his sandals, trusting God's call with no map in hand. But what comes next? He doesn't march into Canaan and build a fortress—he sets up a tent, a flimsy thing flapping in the wind, and waits on a promise he can't yet see. That's where faith takes root—not just in the going, but in the staying, trusting God to sustain what He started. Our next few verses pick up there, showing us how Abraham and Sarah clung to God's word through decades of waiting—holding fast to a city and a family still unseen. This is trust's next challenge: stepping out, then settling in—not in comfort, but in confidence that God's promises hold. Let's lean into that together, our second stop.

II. The Sovereign Sustaining: Faith Longs for a True Home (vv. 10-12)

a. We've seen faith step out—trusting God's call when the path's a blur. Now let's pitch camp and linger there for a few minutes. [Hebrews 11:10-12](#) turns our eyes forward, read it with me again: "For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. And by faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." This is our second stop: tents. Faith lives lightly in a heavy world, resting on God's promise when everything else sinks.

b. Abraham's in Canaan now—verse 9's tents are up, canvas snapping in the wind off the plains. He's not alone. Isaac's there, then Jacob, three generations bound to the same promise. But they're not laying foundations or stacking stone. Verse 10 tells us why: "He was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." Canaan is a gift—rolling hills, grazing land,—but it's not the destination. [Genesis 13:12](#) says Abraham "lived in tents" near Hebron, and decades pass. Fast forward to [Genesis 23](#)—he's still there, not claiming a kingdom, but buying a cave to bury Sarah. No palace, no throne—just a sojourner waiting on something greater. Why?

Because his hope isn't in dirt he can fence—it's in a city God is building, eternal and unshakable, designed by the One who spoke the stars into place. Tents wear thin—pitched today, folded tomorrow—but that's the life of faith. Abraham lived like a man passing through, because he was. He wasn't home yet.

c. And that's not the whole story—because Abraham's not pitching those tents alone, and God's promise isn't just about some distant city. It's about a family, too. And that's where Sarah steps in, turning the page from trust's long wait to faith's wild twist. By [Genesis 18](#), she's 90 years old. [Genesis 18:11](#) puts it delicately: "The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah." In other words, the clock's just not ticking anymore, the batteries expired years ago, the arms are rusted in place and the whole thing is covered in dust—it's dead. She is well past the age of diaper duty. Then comes the shock: she's eavesdropping when God tells Abraham in [Genesis 18:10](#), "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And she loses it, rightfully so. Sarah is so stunned that she laughs about it, and she doesn't let out a polite chuckle, but a full-on, you've got to be kidding me laugh. [Genesis 18:12](#) has her snorting, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" She's not mocking—she's just being real. [Hebrews 11:11](#) rewrites the moment. It says, "By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised." That laugh turns to trust—because God's promise outruns biology. Then Isaac arrives. [Genesis 21:2](#) puts it plainly: "Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age." And [Hebrews 11:12](#) drops the mic: "Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven."

d. Now pause on that phrase—"as good as dead"—because this is where God's promise kicks into gear. Abraham's 100 when Isaac arrives, Sarah's 90, and let's be real, they're not exactly prime candidates for a baby shower. You all know what girl math is, right? Where women swear they're saving money by buying something on sale? They'll say like "well it was originally \$100, but it was \$50 off, so with the \$50 dollars I'm saving that will pay for the \$50 dress and it's practically free!". Well God has math too but instead of using it to buy more dresses from Shein he uses it to ignore expiration dates—His vow reshapes what's barren into abundance, His power turning dust to nations. [Genesis 17:5](#) had promised Abraham, "I've made you the father of a multitude of nations," and [Hebrews 11:12](#) doubles down—stars in the sky, sand on the shore, a line that stretches way beyond their dusty tents. This isn't their doing—Sarah's not some miracle of modern medicine, and Abraham's not outrunning Father Time. It's all God—His power, His promise, His move. Faith lives light because God's the one carrying the weight. [1 Peter 1:3-4](#) seals it: "He has caused us to be born again to a living hope... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." Abraham and Sarah aren't digging in Canaan's dirt—they're holding onto God's word, sustained by the One who keeps those tents standing when the wind picks up.

e. Richard Baxter knew that weight—his story's worth a quick look. Born in 1615 England, he's a frail kid with weak lungs, thrown into ministry in the 1640s as civil war shreds the country. By 1650, he's pastoring in Kidderminster—a poor textile town hammered by plague, people dying faster than he can preach to them. His own health is a wreck—fevers, nosebleeds, sleepless nights—but he won't slow down. In *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, he writes that this world is just a passage to eternity, like a tent pitched for a night. And he lives it—preaching through coughs, scraping by in a bare room while his flock buries their kids. Yet he stays light—pen flying, eyes locked on God's city, not the wreckage around him.

f. And Scripture backs this up with Jacob, Abraham's grandson. [Genesis 47:9](#) captures him, worn thin, telling Pharaoh, "The days of my sojourning are 130 years." He's at the tail end of a long, hard life, but even in his final years, he sees himself as a stranger, a sojourner. Jacob's found himself in Egypt, the land of Pharaoh, but he hasn't let it define him. He's far from Canaan, dying in a foreign palace, yet his heart is anchored to something deeper—God's promise and the land that God swore to give his ancestors. [Genesis 49:29-30](#) shows us this when he says, "Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite." Even as he prepares for death, Jacob's eyes are on the land of promise, the land that isn't his yet, but is guaranteed to his descendants. His request to be buried in Canaan isn't about a place; it's about the promise of a future that God has secured. Jacob's life is marked by tents, by movement, by being a stranger wherever he goes. Egypt offers him comfort—grain to fill his stomach, wealth to fill his pockets, and luxury to fill his life. But none of that roots him. His faith remains unshaken, loose, not bound to the riches of Egypt or the security of Pharaoh's palace. He's still tethered to the promise of God's land, even in the midst of wealth and ease. He could've settled in Egypt, made a life there, but his eyes are fixed on something more enduring, a city and a land that are far more than what Egypt could ever offer. Jacob's faith is a reminder to us: no matter how comfortable life gets, our true hope is not in the things we can touch, but in the promise of God that is yet to come. Egypt's brick and mortar can't hold him. Neither should they hold us.

g. Find your strength here: God is holding you up in this heavy world. He's faithful—building your hope, delivering you when your strength is spent. Sarah didn't conceive Isaac through sheer determination; Abraham didn't summon descendants by chance. It's God—His power, His promise, that keeps you steady. And the call? Stop anchoring to the tents. Let go of the grudges, the grind, the things weighing you down. Live light—serve when it's hard, pray when it's painful, give when it's tight. Abraham didn't fortify Canaan; he lifted his eyes. Sarah trusted God, not her limitations. What's your tent holding you back? Let it go—God is holding you up. Faith lives light because His promise is steady when we are weak. Trust got us moving; tents keep us loose. Now, let's turn our eyes toward a better city.

III. The Sovereign Hope: Faith Confesses a Better Country (vv. 13-16)

a. We've trusted God's call, stepped into the unknown. We've lived light in tents, letting this world's grip slip. Now it's time to lift our eyes. [Hebrews 11:13-16](#) closes this stretch—let's read it again: "These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 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 for them a city." This is our third stop: a better city. Faith hopes in God's sovereign home—a longing that pulls us forward, not back.

b. Picture this: Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob—all part of the same story. Hebrews tells us they all died in faith, never quite grasping the promises they'd been chasing. God gave Abraham the title to Canaan way back in Genesis, but when his story ends, he's still bargaining for a cave at Machpelah—not exactly rolling out the red carpet. Sarah holds Isaac, yet that "multitude of nations" God promised remains just out of reach. Isaac and Jacob carry the torch, but when Jacob's laid to rest, it's in that same cave—no throne, no parade. Yet they saw it—greeted it from afar—not with some distant telescope, but with faith, tipping their hats to a future they'd never step into. They knew who they were: strangers, exiles, passing through. No pity party—just reality. Abraham himself declares it while haggling for that burial plot: "I'm a sojourner, a foreigner here." They were travelers, not tenants. That's their identity.

c. Verse 14 sharpens the focus: "For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland." This isn't some longing for Ur's mud-brick walls or the fish from the river—they're not wishing for a rewind. Verse 15 closes that chapter: "If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return." The camels could've turned around, but they didn't. Why? Verse 16 gives us the answer: "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one." Not the dust of Canaan or the roofs of Ur—but a city God is building, eternal and unshakable. And then, the clincher: "Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." He's not embarrassed by their tent-bound hope—He claims them, builds their home, and His promise outlasts their last breath.

d. That's hope—the lifeline of faith, anchored to God's unshakable home. These saints don't hold the promise in their hands yet, but they keep their eyes on the One who swore it to them. In Genesis 22:17, God makes a covenant with Abraham, saying, "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring." And in Romans 4:21, Paul tells us that Abraham was "fully convinced" that God could deliver on His promise. This wasn't a fleeting wish or a hopeful desire—it was the

kind of confidence that comes from knowing the power of the One who made the promise. Abraham's trust wasn't in a land; it was in a God who doesn't break His word. Even when Canaan was just a brief stop along the way, Abraham and Sarah's faith was anchored in God's unchanging faithfulness. And that's where we step in, as 1 Peter 2:11 reminds us that we, too, are "sojourners and exiles" in this world. Our hope is planted on the same solid foundation—God's promise to bring us home. But let's not kid ourselves—hope in a world like this isn't easy. So how does it look when the road gets bumpy? How does it play out when doubts rise and the path forward isn't clear? Let's walk alongside a few who've gone before us—those who chose the road of seeking over settling—and discover how their steps can guide us when our own faith falters.

e. One of those travelers is Cornelius Van Til—his story pulls us right into that hope. Born in 1895, he starts out on a Dutch farm, a kid with mud-caked boots, up before the sun to milk cows, the kind of work that sticks to your bones. Holland's flat fields shape him—simple, steady—but there's a restlessness brewing, a tug toward something bigger than the barn. By 1920, he's crossed the ocean to America, theology pumping through him like blood, this quiet Dutchman carrying a mind sharp enough to cut through the thickest fog. He lands at Princeton in the 1930s, and it's no cushy gig—the Depression's got everyone's wallets in a chokehold, churches are fracturing over doctrine, and the world's spinning sideways. Van Til's there, teaching a faith that doesn't flinch, one that holds when the ground shakes.

f. He puts it plain in his book *The Defense of the Faith* years later: "The Christian is a pilgrim, not a settler; his citizenship is in heaven, not on earth." That's not some lofty quote from a guy in an armchair up in an ivory tower—it's forged in the grind. His wife's in the kitchen, dishing out soup to broke students who can't pay tuition, while he's down at the docks, preaching to workers with calloused hands and empty pockets. They're living lean—no fat savings, no fancy address—just a rented place, a few books, and a fire for what's ahead. The world's clawing for scraps, piling up what it can, but Van Til's eyes are elsewhere—fixed on God's city, not the rubble of the here and now.

g. He carries that hope to the end—he dies in 1987, still a stranger in this world. Never rich, never tied down to a patch of dirt, but locked on something permanent. His works, stacked in Westminster Seminary's shelves, shout it even now: hope didn't just keep him going—it kept him free. Like Abraham bartering for a cave instead of a crown, Van Til chose the pilgrim's path—living light, longing for the homeland that outshines this one.

h. Moses takes that hope and runs with it—trading Egypt's riches for a harder road. Hebrews tells us he saw the reproach of Christ as worth more than Pharaoh's gold, his eyes locked on a reward beyond the Nile. One day he's in the palace—silk robes, feasts by the river—the next he's out in the

sand, a fugitive with a price on his head after picking the wrong fight. Years later, he's 80, standing by a burning bush as God calls him up, then he's 120, peering across at Canaan from a peak he'll never touch. Why walk away from the glitter? Egypt's shine couldn't hold a candle to God's promise—tents trumped palaces when the real home was still ahead. Moses bet his life on that hope, tasting a land he'd only see through faith. Van Til preached this kind of longing; Moses lived it—both anchored to what's coming, not what's here.

i. C.S. Lewis puts it sharp in his book *The Great Divorce*: “If we insist on keeping Hell... we shall not see Heaven.” He's not just storytelling—by 1960, Lewis is widowed, he's pouring his own ache into every line, that sting of loss, knowing tent-life fades while God's country holds firm. It's Abraham's clan all over—dying with caves, not crowns, saluting a city they couldn't touch. It's Van Til, preaching through the Depression's muck, eyes on heaven. It's Moses, ditching Nile feasts for a peak he'd never climb. They all shed the temporary—for the eternal, a hope that pulls when the world pushes back. Lewis doesn't just stretch the canvas—he paints it bold: faith trades what's fading for what lasts.

j. The thread of faith runs deep—it's a hope that sees God's city beyond the haze of this world. Abraham's family died looking toward it, and we're called to pursue it with every step. God's sovereign hand is your anchor, shaping a home for you when your strength feels spent—just as He proved faithful in Abraham's cave and Sarah's transformed joy. But the challenge cuts to the heart: let go of yesterday's comfort, the things you're holding onto that weigh you down. Abraham didn't turn back to Ur; neither should we settle for less than God's promise. He's not embarrassed to call you His own—He's building your place and claiming you as His. Many feel the ache of being strangers in this world but don't know the One who has bridged that gap. Jesus, through His death and resurrection, has unlocked the gates of that city and secured your place there. Trust in Him today. For those who do, there's a promise to press into—our tents may wear out, but His city stands forever. We're strangers, yes—but we're also His beloved.

IV. Conclusion

a. This morning we've walked through [Hebrews 11:8-16](#), making three steps on the road of faith for strangers like us in this shifting world. Let's pull it all together and finish it up. First, faith begins with trust—stepping out when God calls. Then come the tents—faith doesn't settle down in this heavy world. Finally, the better city—faith's hope in God's unshakable home. Abraham and Sarah didn't see the fulfillment of the promise in their lifetimes, but they saw it from a distance, acknowledging they were strangers here. They didn't look back; they longed for the heavenly country, the city God is preparing for them. That's our journey too—called to trust, freed to move, and drawn to a hope that's unfolding. Abraham's echo rings true: tents over towers, faith over fear, a

city over campsites. This world is not our home, and that's the hope that slices through the world's fleeting comforts.

b. That sense of restlessness you feel—it's no accident. Abraham felt it, Sarah felt it, Moses tasted it, looking at the land he'd never enter. Faith acts—dependence pushes us forward. Don't ignore that nudge to forgive, to take a step when others won't. Tents call us to live light—let go of the burdens that weigh you down, shed the grudges, and stop chasing after things that don't last. Abraham didn't go back to Ur; and we shouldn't settle for anything less than God's promises. [Exodus 3:6](#) reminds us, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”—flawed, tent-dwelling nomads, yet His chosen people, and He's still building our city.

c. For some, the tug of exile is real, but they don't know the One who calls them home. If life feels heavy, uncertain, or blurry; Jesus is the answer—He stepped into our world. [John 1:14](#) says that Jesus took on our flesh, and dwelt among us. The Greek word used in that verse for “dwelt” literally means that he tabernacled with us, he put on a tent. He died to tear down the wall of separation, and He rose to plant a kingdom that will never end. [Romans 5:8](#) says, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Not only did Christ die for us, but he conquered death and we read in places like [Luke 24:6](#), that “He is not here, but has risen.”

d. For those who know Him, this is your charge: press in deeper. Trust His voice when the shadows fall—He's guiding you through. Let go of what drags you down because He's carrying the weight. Lift your eyes to His city, its light breaking through the darkness even now. [Philippians 3:20](#) reminds us, “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” That's not a wish—it's a settled promise, unfolding in the soil of our lives.

e. If you're standing on the outside, feeling the pull of exile and the weight of this world, know that Jesus is knocking. [Revelation 3:20](#) says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him.” So let me ask you, where are you? Stuck in the weight of life, thinking this is all there is? God has more. Step out. Are you wrestling with the load you're carrying? Let it fall—He's enough. Or maybe you're hearing His call fresh today, that ache stirring in your heart. Open the door—He's ready to bring you home.

f. We're all strangers here—trusting, tent-dwelling, city-bound—but we're His. Abraham saw the promise from afar; we see Him near. Step out, release the burden, look up—God is ready to bring you home.

Let's pray