

Hebrews 11

What is the theme of chapter 11? Faith. For the benefit of those Christians who were considering leaving their faith and returning to the old system, the author is citing examples of men and women of the Old Testament who had 20/20 spiritual vision and who endured tremendous shame and suffering rather than renounce their faith.¹

How is faith described (v. 1)? Essentially "faith" is having the confidence ("*being sure of*") that things yet future and unseen ("*hope for*") will happen as God has revealed they will. This is the basic nature of faith.² Faith is confidence in the trustworthiness of God. It is the conviction that what God says is true and what He promises will come to pass.³

What did faith do for the "*ancients*" (v. 2)? They received God's commendation for walking by faith and not by sight. These Jewish Christians were discouraged and thought of giving up on Jesus and their Christianity. They needed a good testimony, and so they needed these examples of faith to break them out of their discouragement.

What illustration of faith is described (v. 3)? Faith is manifested in an understanding that the world was not made of things which are visible but rather by God's command. God was the only one present at creation. He tells us how it happened. We believe and therefore we know. In spiritual matters, faith precedes understanding (John 11:40). The world says seeing is believing. God says believing is seeing.

What is the difference between Cain and Abel (v. 4)? The difference between the sacrifice of Cain and the sacrifice of Abel (Genesis 4:3-5) was not between animal and vegetable. The difference was that Abel's sacrifice was made by faith. The superior quality of Abel's offering derived from the integrity of his heart.

What reward did Abel receive? He was commended as a righteous man. **How does he still speak today?** Through the scriptures. Abel's story challenges us to continue to worship God by believing His promises.

What testimony did God give about Enoch, and what happened to him as a result (v. 5)? He was commended as one who pleased God. He was taken to heaven to be with God. He did not experience death. The life of faith always pleases God. He loves to be trusted. **Who else left earth in a similar way?** Elijah (2 Kings 2:11).

Why is faith needed (v. 6)? Without faith it is impossible to please God. **What specifically must we believe?** That He is who He says He is. "*Anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek him.*" We must believe in the atoning sacrifice of our Savior.

What did Noah do by faith (v. 7)? He built an ark to save his family. "*By his faith he condemned the world.*" **What reward did Noah receive (v. 7)?** "*He became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*" As a small minority, Noah was in the right. He and his family were saved. The rest of the world was wrong and they perished -- a clear message to the Jewish Christians to whom this letter was addressed.

What did Abraham do by faith (v. 8)? "*When called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, he obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.*" He was content to be led blindfolded not knowing the route ahead.⁴ He walked by faith.

Where did he make his home (v. 9)? In the Promised Land. **Why did he live in tents?** "*He was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*" They were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. When he reached the Promised Land he treated it as a foreign land by living in tents rather than by building a permanent place to live.

What promise had God made regarding Sarah's seed (v. 11)? She would bear a son. **Why would it have been hard to believe this promise?** Barrenness and old age. She was a post menopausal woman Genesis (18:11-12).

How was the promise fulfilled (v. 12)? "*Descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.*" **Who were these descendants?** Believing Israelites and spiritual children through Christ -- true believers of every age.

What happened to the people the author has been discussing (v. 13)? What was their relationship to the promise? "*All these people were still living by faith when they died*" (probably referring to the Patriarchs). Abraham

never saw all his offspring. When he died at the age of 175 he had a son and two grandchildren. The Hebrew nation never occupied all the land that had been promised. They never experienced the fulfillment of the promise of a Savior. They "died" realizing that they were aliens and strangers.....that this world was not their home.

What were the patriarchs looking for (vv. 14-16)? A country of their own.....not longing for the country they had left. They were looking for a better country; a heavenly country. Their heart's focus was heaven. **In what sense was God not ashamed of them (v. 16)?** God was "not ashamed" of them, because they were not ashamed to believe Him, and to remain faithful to Him. **Can the same be said of us?**

Why did the assignment to sacrifice Isaac require great faith (v. 17)? Isaac was the heir of the promise (the Covenant). To sacrifice him would make no sense. This was the greatest test Abraham's faith would ever face.

How did Abraham think God might resolve the problem (v. 19)? Abraham knew God was able to raise the dead, and that God would keep His promises. When Abraham was confronted with a promise and a command from God which seemed to contradict each other, he did what we all should do -- he obeyed the command and let God take care of the promise.

What example of faith is listed (v. 22)? By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. **What were the instructions about his bones?** When Joseph died he was never buried. His coffin laid above ground for the 400 or so years until it was taken back to Canaan. It was a silent witness all those years that Israel *was going back* to the Promised Land, just as God had said.

Who showed faith (v. 23)? Moses parents. **How?** They regarded God's will concerning the sanctity of life, as more important than obedience to the state, when the king mandated that all Israelite boys be killed at birth.

Who showed faith (v. 24)? Moses **What were the priorities and choices of Moses (vv. 24-26)?** By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He refused the earthly fame offered by Egypt. He turned his back on both the pleasures and the treasures of Egypt. He spurned the monarchy of Pharaoh, i.e. the politics of his day. He rejected the religion and Gods of Egypt. Moses showed faith when he let God chart his destiny instead of allowing Pharaoh or raw ambition do it.

The walled city of Jericho was the first military objective in the conquest of Canaan. What observations do you have about the fall of Jericho (v. 30)? God uses strategies that appear to be foolish to men in order to accomplish his objectives. The weapons of spiritual warfare are not worldly but have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4).⁵ The twin weapons of obedience and faith destroyed the stronghold of Jericho.

What did Rahab do by faith (v. 31)? She welcomed and hid the spies. **What reward did Rahab receive?** Her life was spared. She was memorialized in the scriptures and was included in the lineage of Christ – as a Gentile no less.

What does the author describe starting in v. 32? There were many who endured intense suffering which God valued as much as the others. **Despite their good testimony, what had these people not received (v. 39)?** What had been promised.....none of them experienced the completed work of the Messiah on their behalf.

What has God provided for us that they did not receive (v. 40)? We are provided something better (seeing and enjoying the completed work of Jesus on our behalf) and therefore have *much more reason* to hold on to our faith, and to not let discouragement and tough times defeat us.

What is the meaning of "only together with us would they be made perfect?" The idea of perfect is "complete." Their redemption could not be made complete until the work of Jesus was complete. The Old Testament believers were not as privileged as we are. They lived on the other side of the cross; we live in the full glory of the cross. Yet how do our lives compare with theirs. That is the challenge of chapter 11.

¹ Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 2194

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Hebrews, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 129

³ Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 2195

⁴ Ibid. p. 2196

⁵ Ibid. p. 2199