

# Hebrews 11 - The Hall of Faith

## II. Application Section of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 10:19—13:25)

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*It is not thy hold on Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It is not even thy faith in Christ that saves thee, though that be the instrument. It is Christ's blood and merit. [Charles Haddon Spurgeon]*

*Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen.*

[Dr. J. Oswald Sanders]

The writer encouraged his readers in Heb 11 by reminding them of the faithful perseverance of selected OT saints. The writer invites the readers to emulate the example of enduring faith of the heroes listed. This chapter also demonstrates that unbelief is the worst sin anyone can commit. God has a remedy for every sin except the state of unbelief.

This does not mean there is an unpardonable sin. There is no act which you could commit today that God would not forgive tomorrow. But if you continue in a state of unbelief, God has no remedy for that at all.

### **Three Types of Faith**

#### **Unreasonable Faith**

Believing in something in spite of the evidence. We hold an unreasonable belief when we refuse to accept or acknowledge evidence that clearly refutes what we think is true. The claim "touching a toad will cause warts" is an excellent example. We now have evidence that viruses, not toads or frogs, cause warts, so people who still believe you can contract warts from toads hold an unreasonable belief. In a similar way, unreasonable faith results in believing in something false (because it can be disproved by the evidence). Jesus did not ask His followers to ignore the world around them or to ignore evidence that might refute His claims. In fact, to this day, there isn't any evidence disproving the eyewitness accounts recorded in the Gospels.

#### **Blind Faith**

Believing in something without any evidence. We hold a blind belief when we accept a claim even though we are completely unaware of any evidence supporting the claim. I believe, for example, that James David Wallace Sr. is my biological father, even though I am unaware of any DNA test results that would prove this definitively. I may be right about our biological relationship, or I may be wrong; I would only know for sure if I were to perform a paternity test. In a similar way, blind faith can sometimes result in believing something that's true, but it can also result in believing something that's false if there is actual evidence proving the claim untrue. Jesus did not ask His followers to believe without evidence. In fact, He repeatedly provided evidence to support His claims.

#### **Forensic Faith**

The adjective forensic comes from the Latin word *forensis*, which means "in open court" or "public." The term usually refers to the process detectives and prosecutors use to investigate and establish evidence in a public trial or debate. Believing in something because of the evidence. We hold a forensic belief when we believe something because it is the most reasonable inference from evidence, even though we may still have some unanswered questions. I believe, for example, that amoxicillin can help fight bacterial infections. There is laboratory evidence to support this claim, and I've personally used it to fight infections. I still don't know how (or why) this drug works, but I have faith in amoxicillin, even though I have many unanswered questions. In a similar way, Jesus encouraged us to have a forensic faith based on the evidence He provided. He knew we would still have unanswered questions, but He wanted us to be able to defend what we believe (and guard the truth) in a hostile public setting.

In this chapter, the author's main point is that, since the OT saints exercised faith, to depart from faith is to depart from the OT saints. Second, in 10:35-39, he encouraged them to exercise patient endurance. In this chapter, he draws many examples from the OT to show how people in the OT exercised patient endurance. These OT saints won the battle through patient endurance and, therefore, these believers must win the battle the same way. Third, in 6:12 he states, that you be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. In this chapter, he will give many examples of those whom the readers can imitate.

## Hebrews 11

### (2) Illustrations of the life of faith (11:1-40)

#### (A) Explanation of faith (11:1)

1 Now **faith** is *the certainty* of *things* hoped for, a **proof** of *things* not seen.

1 Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of *things* not seen.

1 Now faith is the assurance that what we hope for will come about and the certainty that what we cannot see exists.

1 Now faith is the substance of *things* hoped for, the evidence of *things* not seen.

- "...faith" - having the confidence or assurance that things yet future and unseen will happen as God has revealed they will

— This is not a *definition* of faith, it is a *description* of faith. He is not describing saving faith, but is describing faith as a principle that deals with what is still future and unseen  
— Faith looks forward to the future, to things anticipated and hoped for. Since the future with all its hope is not yet realized, patient endurance is necessary. The one who lives by faith will patiently endure.

— Faith enables us to treat as real the things that are unseen

- Faith is NOT:

- Believing what you know is not true
- Believing in something you do not understand because it is unclear
- Believing as a necessary addition to one's works

— Christians do not use faith to discover knowledge. Rather, faith is their response based on knowledge we have already received. Faith is not, as atheists believe, a word Christians use because they do not have enough evidence to justify holding a belief.

- "...certainty" - *hypostasis*, used 4x in the NT, with two meanings: "exact reproduction" (1:3); "assurance" (Cf. 3:14; 2 Cor 9:4; 11:17)

— If the author's intent is *subjective*, it means assurance or confidence, emphasizing results. The result is absolute certainty; a living faith that gives a living hope so real that it gives absolute certainty or assurance of *things* hoped for, such as spiritual maturity, the blessings of the Messiah's return, entrance into heavenly rest, and future glorification.

- If the author's intent is *objective*, the meaning is *substance*: that which gives real existence; it was used in ancient documents as evidence of title deeds and gave guarantee of ownership. It refers to the real essence, the real content, the reality; faith is the essence of a future reality.
- As a scientific term, it is the opposite of hypothesis or theory
- "...proof" - *ellegos*, is a legal term meaning "evidence that is accepted for conviction." It is the commitment to a certainty.
- What we are convinced about is things not seen but present, such as the priestly ministry of Christ, our access to God in prayer, assurance of spiritual maturity, and the full pardon of sin.
- While we cannot see these things, we know they are there. Our faith makes us certain that these things are true.
- As a noun, it is used only here and 2 Tim 3:16
- The person of faith lives out his belief; what his mind and spirit are convinced is true

This hope is not a mere wish, or dream, or fantasy. It is a reality. Faith is *substance* for a scientific mind and *evidence* for a legal mind. All of these things he has spoken of, however, are still future and unseen. Hope must have a foundation, and that foundation is Scripture; therefore, they must wait patiently until it comes to pass.

The basic teaching of this verse is that faith gives substance to things hoped for and demonstrates provable reality to things unseen. Faith gives assurance that the other world, the unseen world, does exist. The life of the believer today is lived in the assurance of another reality; a reality outside the realm of the believer's experience. Although these future things are unseen, the person with faith is convinced of the reality of them.

(B) Examples of faith (11:2-40)

- (a) Intro (11:2)
- (b) Antediluvian era (11:2-7)

- 2 For by it the **people of old** gained approval.
- 2 For by it the men of old gained approval.
- 2 By faith our ancestors won approval.
- 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.
- The author now teaches that history proves that it is possible to live this way...
- "...people of old" - the OT saints to be listed shortly
- Since the OT saints exercised faith, to depart from faith is to depart from the OT saints
- These OT saints won the battle through patient endurance; therefore, *these believers must win the battle the same way* (10:35-39)

— Previously: "so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and endurance inherit the promises." (6:12).

(i) Creation (11:3)

**3** By faith we understand that **theworld** has been created by the **word of God** so that **what is seen has not been made out of things that are visible.**

**3** By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

**3** By faith we understand that time was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are invisible.

**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.

- Creation is something that must be accepted by faith because no man was present to observe it

— Not only is faith to be exercised in a future event, which cannot be seen, but it must also be exercised in a present event, which is not seen, and in a past event, which was not seen

— "...the world" - ages, referring to all the times and administrations of the ages

— Faith involves accepting God's viewpoint as He has revealed it in His word. This includes how the "worlds" came into being and how it will end.

— "...word of God" - *rhema*, the spoken word; God spoke and the worlds appeared

— "God said..." [10x]: Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26,28-29

— "...that what is seen has not been made out of things that are visible" - belief in the existence of the world is not faith, nor is it faith when men hold that the world was made out of some pre-existing stuff

— It is when we understand that it was the Word of God (God's command) that produced all things, that is faith. Had the visible world been formed out of materials which were subject to human observation, there would be no room for faith. Science could have traced it to its origin.

Scripture never offers arguments or proofs for the existence of God. Throughout Scripture, the existence of God is never a matter of doubt or debate. The reasonings that are found (Ps 19; Rom 1:19ff) always start from assurance, never from uncertainty. God is not a metaphysical concept for questioning and discussion...He is the supreme reality, and the foundation and source of all created existence.

So when one is exhorted to draw near to God, he must believe that He exists. He is not being invited to take a step in the dark, but to turn to the light; he is not being encouraged to work up a blind faith, but to entrust the whole of his being to Him who is Himself truth and light and life.

(ii) Abel (11:4)

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he was attested to be righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he **stillspeaks**.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did, and by faith he was declared to be righteous, since God himself accepted his offerings. And by faith he continues to speak, even though he is dead.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

- Abel manifested faith through the recognition of an obligation: Cain offered vegetables, the fruit of his labor, but by faith Abel offered a blood sacrifice, which is what God demanded.

— Cain is an example of someone who believes he can choose his way to God; Abel is an example of one who chooses God's way to approach Him.

— The blood sacrifice did not make Abel righteous: what made Abel righteous was his faith and the integrity of his heart, and the evidence of his faith was that he offered the type of sacrifice God required.

— How did Abel know his offering was accepted? Fire came down and consumed it!

- "...still speaks" - even though Abel is dead, he still speaks to us through the scriptural record by challenging us to continue to worship, and show reverence for God by believing on His promises

(iii) Enoch (11:5-6)

5 By faith Enoch **was taken up** so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for before he was taken up, he was attested to have been pleasing to God.

5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

5 By faith Enoch was taken away without experiencing death. He could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he won approval as one who pleased God.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

- Abel was murdered, but Enoch never died, yet both demonstrated faith
- "...was taken up" - the act of translation has the concept of being "raptured" from earth to Heaven. It does not simply mean transferring geographically to Heaven, but it means a transformation of the body. It is a transformation whereby corruption puts on incorruption and mortality puts on immortality.
- Since Enoch was translated, it means that he will never return to die. That is why he cannot be one of the Two Witnesses of Rev 11.
- The Hebrew of Genesis simply reads, "He was there and then he was not there any more." Enoch was *well-pleasing unto God* before his translation. The fact that he pleased God was evidence of Enoch's faith (Gen 5:22-24).

6 And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and *that* He proves to be One who **rewardsthose who seek Him**.

6 And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

6 Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who diligently search for him.

6 But 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.

- Walking by faith involves both believing that God exists, and believing that He will reward the faithful. Cain and Enoch were well-pleasing to God because they had faith.
- The original readers faced temptation to abandon that hope, just as we do
- "...rewards" - in almost all of the examples of faith given in this chapter, there is a clear and direct relationship between faith and reward
- "...those who seek him" - those He will reward are those who who "are seeking after Him" (present tense in the Greek), not believers who have stopped seeking after Him

(iv) Noah (11:7)

7 By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the **salvation** of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

7 By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, reverently prepared an ark to save his family, and by faith he condemned the world and inherited the righteousness that comes by faith.

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; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

- "...salvation" - *sōtēria*, used here not in a salvation/justification context, but in a rescue/deliverance context (Cf. Matt 24:13; Phil 1:19). Noah wasn't justified because he built the ark (that would be justification by works), he was saved/delivered from the flood waters.

- Until the time of Noah, it had never rained upon the earth and there had never been a flood. He showed his faith in something that was not yet seen by building the ark.

- By building the ark, Noah accomplished two things:

1. He condemned the world through his life and testimony; the ark was a visible sign of the people's unbelief
2. He became heir of the righteousness which is accorded to faith. God imputed righteousness to him based on his faith.

(c) Patriarchal era (11:8-22)

(i) Abraham and Sarah (11:8-19)

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, **obeyed** by going out to a place which he was to receive for an **inheritance**; and he left, not knowing where he was going.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

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.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

- "By faith" - Abraham demonstrated his faith in three phases:

1. Leaving his home when God called him to leave Mesopotamia (v8)
2. When he reached the Promised Land, but had to live in it as a foreigner (v9-10)
3. When God called him to sacrifice Isaac (v17-19)

- "...obeyed" - *hypakouo*, obeyed *immediately*; the Greek has a present participle, which means the action occurred at the same time as the main verb: while God was still speaking, Abraham was getting up to obey immediately, demonstrating his faith.

— Abraham's faith accepted God's promises and acted on them, even though there was nothing to indicate that they would be fulfilled

- "...inheritance" - the Promised Land was defined as an inheritance (Deut 15:4; 19:14; 25:19; 26:1), merited by obedience (Ex 23:30; Deut 2:31; 11:11-24; 16:20; 19:8-9; Joshua 11:23; 1:6-7)
- By faith he obeyed and went to a place he would afterward receive as a future *inheritance*
- Like Abraham, we should look forward to our inheritance in the coming kingdom, and live like "strangers and pilgrims" (v13) in this world

- 9 By faith he lived as a stranger in the land of promise, as *in a foreign land, living in tents* with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;
- 9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as *in a foreign land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;
- 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who also inherited the same promise,
- 9 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:
- "...living" - *katoikeo*, to live as a stranger in a temporary dwelling
- Isaac and Jacob were fellow-heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant; it was not sustained through the other sons
- "...tents" - for the rest of his life, from the time he entered the Land until he died, he lived in a tent

- 10 for he was looking for **thecity** which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
- 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
- 10 because he was waiting for the city with permanent foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
- 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.
- "...the city" - the Heavenly Jerusalem: it is mentioned three more times (11:16; 12:22; 13:14; also in Rev 21:1,9-27)
- Abraham believed this "heavenly Jerusalem" was his ultimate Promised Land; this was in addition to, not in place of, the Land of Canaan
- Like Abraham, we should look forward to our inheritance in the coming world and should live as strangers and pilgrims in this world

- 11 By faith even **Sarahherself** received ability **toconceive**, even beyond *the* proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

11 By faith Sarah, even though she was old and barren, received the strength to conceive, because she was convinced that the one who had made the promise was faithful.

11 Through faith also Sarah 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.

— "...Sarah herself" - she, on her own, believed God would fulfill His promise of a child, which was completely beyond the realm of natural possibility

— This verse seems to contradict Gen 18:12, which states Sarah "laughed" out of unbelief, because she was not exercising faith (Abraham also laughed, Gen 17:17); see explanation below.

— "...to conceive" - the Greek literally says "the depositing of sperm"; this is the male's action in conception

— This shows that the faith to which the author is referring is not Sarah's faith, but Abraham's faith

— It was Abraham's faith that gave Sarah the ability to conceive, and in that sense, she became one with Abraham by faith. Both Abraham and Sarah "received strength to conceive seed."

— The emphasis is not that Sarah herself had this faith, but that Abraham had faith. Because of her husband's faith, she conceived.

12 Therefore even from one man, and one who was **as good as dead** at that, there were born *descendants* who were just as the stars of heaven in number, and as the innumerable *grains of sand* along the seashore.

12 Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, **as many descendants** as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

12 Abraham was as good as dead, yet from this one man came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

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.

— "...as good as dead" - Abraham fathered many nations, even after he was so old as to be sterile; from this one sterile man were born innumerable offspring

— He was not only the father of the Jewish nation, but also the father of several other nations that now make up the present Arab States

13 **All these** died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen and welcomed them **from a distance**, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the

earth.

**13** All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

**13** All these people died having faith. They did not receive the things that were promised, yet they saw them in the distant future and welcomed them, acknowledging that they were strangers and foreigners on earth.

**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, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

– “All these” - Abraham, Sarah, Isaac & Jacob

— They lived as exiled strangers or aliens, by faith, to the very end, and they died believing God would eventually fulfill all of His promises to them.

– “...from a distance” - they looked forward to possessing a land that God promised to give them

— The Patriarchs eventually died and the promises were not fulfilled in their lifetime, but they were willing to embrace them *from afar*

— They knew that if they died and the promises were not yet fulfilled, that the promises would be fulfilled in another lifetime. They were willing to live their present lives waiting for their reward in the next life.

**14** For those who say **suchthings** make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

**14** For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

**14** For people who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a country of their own.

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

– “...such things” - the fact that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth (v13)

— We need to be cognizant in our circumstances that we’re only pilgrims here on earth; as believers, we are citizens of heaven, and our minds need to be fixated on this reality

— The fact that they called themselves “pilgrims and strangers” shows they desired a homeland during their lifetime, however it was not God’s will go give them the Land in their lifetimes, but they were willing to receive it in another lifetime.

— This promise will be fulfilled in the messianic kingdom, when Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will own the Promised Land (Cf. Matt 8:11)

15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that **country which they left**, they would have had opportunity to return.

15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

15 If they had been thinking about what they had left behind, they would have had an opportunity to go back.

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

- "...country which they left" - if they had tired of waiting for God to give them the Land, they could have returned to where they came from (Ur or Haran) at any time

— However, they never turned back to what they had left, which might have encouraged them to apostatize

16 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 a city for them.

16 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 a city for them.

16 Instead, they were longing for a better country, that is, a heavenly one. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he has prepared a city for them.

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.

- "...not ashamed" - *litotes*, God was not ashamed of them because they were not ashamed to believe Him, and to remain faithful to Him; in fact, God is willing and happy to be called their God

Each example of faith thus far is a positive one, involving a believer who kept on trusting God and His promises, in spite of the temptation to stop trusting. This is what the writer is urging his readers to do throughout this epistle: keep on trusting and do not turn back. In every case, God approved and rewarded the continuing faith of the faithful.

## Summary

- The Patriarchs lived according to faith
- They did not receive the totality of the promise in their lifetime
- They saw the future fulfillment by faith
- They believed that God would bring the promises to pass
- They embraced the promises
- They confessed that they were earthly strangers and pilgrims
- They were seeking a heavenly country

- They had *no desire to return to Ur or Haran*

Beginning in v17, the writer's exposition of a life of faith begins. He develops the idea (Cf. v3) that faith should be the way the believer looks at all of life and history. He does this to help his readers see that continuance in faith is the only logical and consistent attitude for a believer. Using a various experiences, the writer shows that faith remains the constant factor by which these experiences are met and understood.

**17** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and the one who had received the promises was offering up his **onlyson**;

**17** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*;

**17** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered Isaac—he who had received the promises was about to offer his unique son in sacrifice,

**17** By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

— Abraham knew by this time that the promise would only be transmitted through Isaac.

The promise would not be transmitted through his other sons, of which he had several.

— Now, he was asked by God to kill the one son who was understood to be the inheritor of the promises

— The Greek structure again points out that Abraham obeyed immediately: "While being tried, he offered up"

— "...only son" — emphasizes uniqueness, not origin; at this time, Abraham had another son (Ishmael), and later had six more sons

— Isaac was unique in that he was the only son of Sarah, and he was the only son who would inherit the covenant

**18** *it was he to whom it was said, "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE NAMED."*

**18** *it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called."*

**18** *about whom it had been said, "It is through Isaac that descendants will be named for you."*

**18** *Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:*

— Abraham carried out the command in spite of the fact that the Abrahamic Covenant was to be fulfilled in Isaac

**19** *He considered that God is **able to raise** people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*

19 He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

19 Abraham was certain that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did get Isaac back in this way.

19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

- Why was Abraham willing to immediately obey and kill his son Isaac? — Because the content of his faith rested on the creative power of God.

- "...able to raise" - Abraham firmly believed that if he had to kill Isaac before he had children, God could and would raise the dead to have children and fulfill the promise

— Abraham knew he was acting out a prophecy: he named the place, "In the mount of the Lord, it will be seen" (Gen 22:14)

— Two thousand years later, on that very spot, another Father would sacrifice His "only begotten" Son...

— We need to continue to trust and obey God as well, even though He may need to raise us from the dead to fulfill His promises to us

— Isaac was "dead" to Abraham from the time the commandment came: *three days in total...*

### **A Key Principle**

The Sadducees did not believe in a physical resurrection from the dead as did the Pharisees. The Sadducees liked to ask the Pharisees tricky questions to make them look stupid, and one day the Sadducees tried one of those tricky questions on Jesus: A woman was married successively to seven brothers: in the resurrection, whose wife will she be? (Matt 22:23-32).

Jesus answered that the Sadducees did not understand God's power and they did not understand the nature of the resurrection. Then to prove the resurrection, Jesus quoted where God said: *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* (Ex 3:6). That one statement was enough to prove the resurrection. How did it prove the resurrection? The phrase "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" was the OT formula for the Abrahamic Covenant. In that covenant, God made specific promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but they all died without the fulfillment of those promises. Because God is a covenant-keeping God, His covenant with them *obligates God to resurrect* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to fulfill His promises (and so David, in like manner) in the Millennial Kingdom!

#### **(ii) Isaac (11:20)**

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

**20** By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

- Although Isaac blessed the son he did not want to bless, nevertheless by faith he knew that what was prophesied in those blessings would come to pass
- Isaac believed that God would provide for them what He promised
- The significant idea with all three (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph) was their firm conviction that death cannot frustrate God's purposes

(iii) Jacob (11:21)

21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons "and worshipped while leaning on the top of his staff."

**21** By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

- Like his father Isaac, Jacob also issued prophetic blessings concerning the two sons of Joseph
- The fact that Jacob was *dying* shows he knew he would die before God's promises would be fulfilled
- Yet Jacob believed God was able to keep His promises, and he did not hesitate to give prophetic blessings to the two sons of Joseph

(iv) Joseph (11:22)

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites and gave them instructions about burying his bones.

**22** By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

- Joseph knew from his father, Jacob, that the sojourning of Israel in Egypt was temporal. He knew God intended to bring the Jews back into the Land of Canaan (Gen 15:13-16).
- As he grew older and was dying, Joseph also realized the promise would not be fulfilled in his lifetime. Nevertheless, he believed it would be fulfilled; in his will, when the Jews left

Egypt, he wanted *his bones* carried with them (Gen 50:25)

- (d) Mosaic era (11:23-29)
  - (i) Moses' parents (11:23)

**23** By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his **parents**, because they saw he was **a beautiful child**; and they were not afraid of the **king's edict**.

**23** By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

**23** By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after he was born, because they saw that he was a beautiful child and were not afraid of the king's order.

**23** By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

- "...parents" - Amran and Jochebed

— They had faith in God, and placed obedience to His will above Pharaoh's command. They regarded God's will concerning the sanctity of life as more important than obedience to the state, when national law required disobeying God's will (Cf. Acts 4:19). God honored their faith.

- "...a beautiful child" - *asteios*, means much more than what the English "proper or elegant" implies. *It means she and her husband both recognized that God had a special plan for their son.*

— This word is only used 2x: both times it refers to Moses (here; Acts 7:20)

- "...king's edict" - Pharaoh had ordered all Jewish male babies killed

- The lesson is that faith works despite adversity and faith accepts God's plan

- (ii) Moses (11:24-28)

**24** By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

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**24** By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

- Moses had a true appreciation for the promises of God. This led him to choose the reward associated with Israel's promised Messiah over the temporal material wealth he could have enjoyed had he stayed in Egypt.

— Moses chose to no longer be identified with the Egyptians, but would now be identified with his own Jewish people

- He was “laying up treasure in heaven”
- We should be willing to suffer temporary disgrace, reproach and loss as we continue to cast our lot with God’s faithful disciples
- Faith must sometimes reject worldly honor

25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin,

25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

25 because he preferred being mistreated with God’s people to enjoying the pleasures of sin for a short time.

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

- He recognized that while the Egyptians ruled the world and the Jews were their slaves, the Jews were the people of God

26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

26 He thought that being insulted for the sake of the Messiah was of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

- As with both Abraham and Moses, the decisions we make today will determine our rewards tomorrow. Even more than this, the decisions we make today should be motivated by the expectation of receiving rewards in the future.

— The entire emphasis in this epistle is: Don’t live for what the world will promise you today. Live for what God has promised you in the future.

— The possibility of reward is the most frequently mentioned motivation for enduring in the faith (Cf. Matt 5:10-12; 16:24-27; 1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 4:16-18; 2 Tim 2:11-13; 1 John 2:28; Rev 22:12)

— He desired spiritual treasures rather than material ones

27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he persevered, as though **seeing Him who is unseen**.

27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.

27 By faith he left Egypt, without being afraid of the king's anger, and he persevered because he saw the one who is invisible.

**27** By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

- Moses persevered in spite of the king's "wrath," and so should we, in spite of any wrath we may experience from ungodly opponents

- Moses departure from Midian, 40 years before the exodus, is in view here. The reason for his departure was because Pharaoh sought to kill him (Ex 2:14-15).

- "...seeing Him who is unseen" - Moses continually sought the unseen God; likely not a reference to the burning bush, but to his fixed habit of spiritual perception or keeping God continually in view throughout his life.

28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch them.

28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

28 By faith he established the Passover and the sprinkling of blood to keep the destroyer of the firstborn from touching the people.

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

- Moses continued to demonstrate confidence in the "blood of the lamb" that God provided; so should we. He avoided God's judgment in doing so.

— He went through all the details of killing the lamb and applying the blood of the lamb upon the lintels and the door-posts because he believed this would save the Jewish firstborn. Faith obeys the details of God's Word.

### (iii) Israel (11:29)

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

29 By faith they went through the Red Sea as if it were dry land. When the Egyptians tried to do this, they were drowned.

**29** By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

- The Israelites experienced victory over their enemies as they trusted God; we experience victory in the same way

- At the Red Sea, the Israelites willingly went forward at God's Word, rather than turning back
- By faith, they overcame natural obstacles. Faith is willing to do what is unnatural.

- (e) Conquest era (11:30-31)
  - (i) Jericho (11:30)

**30** By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after *the Israelites* had marched around them for seven days.

**30** By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

**30** By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

**30** By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

- Their trust and obedience resulted in their preservation and eventual entrance into their inheritance. Faith overcomes enemies.

— Faith will sometimes require one to do what seems unnatural or illogical

- The author uses the first act of faith, passing through the Red Sea, and the last act of faith, encircling and marching around Jericho until the walls of Jericho fell, to cover the whole period of the Wilderness Wanderings.

- (ii) Rahab (11:31)

**31** By faith the prostitute Rahab did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

**31** By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

**31** By faith Rahab the prostitute did not die with those who were disobedient, because she had welcomed the spies with a greeting of peace.

**31** By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

- Even though Rahab was a Gentile sinner and secular prostitute, God spared her because of her faith when He destroyed all who were disobedient around her

— Likewise, God will preserve today's faithful, not because they are personally worthy, but because of their faith in Him

— Other Canaanites knew what Rahab knew, but they did not obey, and they perished

— Rahab's example is that she, although a Gentile foreigner, had a faith that was directed toward the future and found specific content in the acts of the God of Israel (Joshua 2:11). She was prepared to assume present danger for the sake of future preservation (Joshua 2:12-16).

- (f) Subsequent eras (11:32-38)

**32 And what more shall I say?** For time will fail **me** if I tell of **Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,**

**32** And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,

**32** And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets.

**32** And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

- The point he is making in this chapter is that faith is associated with trials; it is natural for

faith to be tested (this is the major point of the Epistle of James)

— Since it is natural for faith to be tested, trials should not nullify faith: trials should strengthen faith, because trials bring more faith

- "And what more shall I say?" - the writer suggests that there wasn't much point in citing more examples. The OT is full of good models of persevering, living faith.

— Nevertheless, the writer selected a few additional Israelites for mention, along with what their faith accomplished. Each individual was less than perfect, as is every believer, yet God approved the faith of each one.

- "...me" - qualified by a participle of the masculine gender, meaning the writer was male, not female

- In the list below, the writer employed the rhetorical device of *paraleipsis*, a writer suggests that he is not going to mention something, but then mentions it anyway. This stresses the suggestiveness of what he has omitted, meaning he could have cited many more examples of persevering faith, other than what he's presented, if that was necessary.

- "...Gideon" - Gideon's 300 put the terror-stricken Midianites into dire confusion, and who, in the darkness, slew one another, so that only 15,000 out of the great army of 120,000 escaped alive.

— The memory of this great deliverance impressed itself deeply on the mind of the nation (1 Sam 12:11; Ps 83:11; Is 9:4; 10:26)

- "...Barak" - Barak was summoned by the prophetess Deborah to lead his countrymen to war against the host of Jabin under the leadership of Sisera

— He attacked from Mt. Tabor as Jabin's 900 chariots bogged down on the alluvial plain of Jezreel

- "...Samson" - with supernatural strength linked to his Nazarite vow, Samson wreaked havoc on the Philistines

— His colorful pranks were overshadowed by a lustful lapse with Delilah that resulted in his undoing

— In a final repentence, he brought down the house, killing more Philistines than in his lifetime

- "...Jephthah" - Jephthah was a Gileadite who delivered Israel from Ammonite domination
- He sacrificed his daughter to fulfill a vow, suppressed an Ephraimite force in Gilead, and judged Israel six years (Judges 10:6—12:7)
- "...David" - David was a victorious warrior and a clever general. He subdued Philistines to the West (Saul's nemesis); Syrians and Hadadezer in the North; Ammonites and Moabites on the East; and Edomites and Amalekites in the South.
- He was a constructive administrator: "Judgment and justice to all the people." He organized the priesthood into 24 courses. He was a major poet and songwriter, composing 73 psalms.
- "...Samuel" - Samuel was equaled only by Moses. He ended the period of the Judges.
- He headed the order of the prophets and founded the schools of the prophets
- He placed Israel's first king on the throne (Saul) and later anointed David
- "...the prophets" - a list follows in v33...

33 who by faith **conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,**

33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

33 Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, received promises, shut the mouths of lions,

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

- "...conquered kingdoms" - Joshua, Israel's judges, David

- "...performed acts of righteousness" - David, Samuel

- "...obtained promises" - Gideon, Barak, David

- "...shut the mouths of lions" - Daniel (Dan 6:17-22), Samson (Judges 14:5-6), Benaiah (1 Chr 11:22), David (1 Sam 17:34-37)

34 **quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.**

34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

34 put out raging fires, escaped death by the sword, found strength in weakness, became powerful in battle, and routed foreign armies.

34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

- "quenched the power of fire" - Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (Dan 3:23-27)

- "...escaped the edge of the sword" - Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Jephthah, David, Jeremiah

- "...from weakness were made strong" - Gideon, Samson, David, Esther
- "...became mighty in war" - Joshua, Barak, David
- "...put foreign armies to flight" - David, Jehoshaphat

35 Women received **back their dead by resurrection**; and others were tortured, **not accepting their release**, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;

35 Women received **back their dead by resurrection**; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;

35 Women received their dead raised back to life. Other people were brutally tortured, but refused to be ransomed, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

- "Women received **back their dead by resurrection**" - because they believed God could and would do what He had promised (Cf. 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37)

- In both Testaments, most resurrection miracles were on behalf of women:

— The Widow of Zarephath, whose son was raised by Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24)

— The Shunamite woman, whose son was raised by Elisha (2 Kings 4:32-35)

— The Widow of Nain, whose son was raised by Jesus (Luke 7:15)

— Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, who was also raised by Jesus (John 11:43-44)

- "...and" - here, the entire tenor of this chapter changes...from positive blessings on those who followed God to the negative side, the torture, imprisonments, etc., continuing on through v38

- "...not accepting their release" - meaning they did not take the easy way out. They could have renounced their faith such as the three friends of Daniel could have done.

— They were given an option, but they did not seek the easy way out. They chose to die a physical death so they might obtain a better resurrection.

36 and others experienced **mocking and flogging**, and further, **chains and imprisonment**.

36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

36 Still others endured taunts and floggings, and even chains and imprisonment.

36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

- "...mocking and flogging" - Jeremiah

- "...chains and imprisonment" - Joseph

37 They were **stoned**, they were **sawn in two**, they were **tempted**, they were **put to death with the sword**; they **went about in sheepskins, in goatskins**, being **destitute, afflicted, tormented**

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated

37 They were stoned to death, sawed in half, and killed with swords. They went around in sheepskins and goatskins. They were needy, oppressed, and mistreated.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

- "...stoned" - Zechariah

- "...sawn in two" - perhaps Isaiah

— According to complementary rabbinic sources, Isaiah was sawn in two after hiding from Manasseh in the trunk of a cedar tree. He was discovered when Manasseh ordered the tree cut down.

- "...tempted" - Joseph

- "...put to death with the sword" - Uriah

— The inclusion of Uriah's name in the list of the "mighty men" in 2 Sam 23:39 parallels 11:41; the name is found also in 2 Sam 12:9-10,15; 1 Kings 15:5; Matt 1:6.

- "...went about in sheepskins, in goatskins" - Elijah

- "...destitute, afflicted, tormented" - the prophets

38 (**people of whom the world was not worthy**), wandering in deserts, on mountains, and sheltering in caves and holes in the ground.

38 (**men of whom the world was not worthy**), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

38 The world wasn't worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and from caves to holes in the ground.

38 (**Of whom the world was not worthy**:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

- "...of whom the world was not worthy" - those who accept death without apostatizing, because they do not turn away from following the Lord, even in the most severe pressure

- "...wandering in deserts...mountains...caves...holes in the ground" - Obadiah, the friend of Elijah

Faith does not always result in deliverance. These verses, which would have been particularly comforting to the original, distressed readers, refer to many forms of persecution. Sometimes a faithful person's reward comes on the other side of the grave. Some of the original readers, and ourselves today, might have had to or will endure death. All of these people had points of similarity with the readers: they, too, had forfeited

employment and were ostracized from society, reduced to poverty, mocked, imprisoned, and so on (nevertheless, no one as yet had given his life for the faith).

This passage shows it was not God's will to save everyone physically. God does not work the same way in every case. There were some people He resurrected from the dead, but there were others He did not resurrect from the dead. There were some He rescued alive, while there were others He allowed to be tortured to death. All of these had faith, although the results of their faith varied as God willed.

(g) Conclusion (11:39-40)

**39** And all these, having gained approval through their faith, **did not receive what was promised,**

**39** And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

**39** All these people won approval for their faith but they did not receive what was promised,

**39** And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:  
- "...did not receive what was promised" - certain personal promises were fulfilled in their day, but the OT saints have not yet received the national and Messianic promises and prophecies. This will not happen until the Second Coming and the inauguration of the messianic kingdom.

40 because God had provided **something better for us**, so that **apart from us they would not be made perfect.**

40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

40 since God had planned something better for us, so that they would not be perfected without us.

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

- Why did God allow the OT saints to die before His promises were fulfilled? According to v40, because there is a unity in God's program.

— If God had fulfilled all the Messianic Kingdom promises to the OT saints in their lifetime, then there would be nothing for present believers to anticipate.

— Since these messianic promises have not yet been fulfilled, both OT and NT believers can anticipate the same thing: the messianic kingdom.

- "...something better for us" - the indefinite pronoun leaves the precise nature of the blessing undefined

— The important thing is not exactly what it is but that God has not imparted it prematurely

- “us” - Christians
- “...apart from us they would not be made perfect” - OT and NT saints will eventually reach their perfection together
- “made perfect” - refers to their final “rest” (inheritance), and it rests entirely, as ours does, on the sacrificial death of Christ