

## Hebrews 11

- Chapter 10 flows smoothly into chapter 11
  - The writer says we are not those who shrink back
    - He meant that we shouldn't want to be those who shrink back
      - And by their shrinking back, they prove they are not of the faith
    - Rather, we must be those who endure patiently expecting our reward in the end
  - So what does it look like to persevere in faith despite circumstances, which might cause us to want to shrink back?
    - That brings us to the Hall of Faith
      - It begins with a timeless descriptions of faith
      - And then proceeds into a long series of examples that illustrate faith lived out
    - Each example is used much like OT scripture has been used overall in the text
      - It is a marker that reminds the reader of a longer story from their OT scripture
      - So we are going to read each example and then learn a little about how it illustrates faith
- Let's begin with a description of faith

[Heb. 11:1](#) ¶ Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

[Heb. 11:2](#) For by it the men of old gained approval.

- Assurance of things hoped for
  - The word for assurance is an interesting Greek word
    - Hupostasis

- It is used in a few other places in the New Testament and it can have two different meanings
  - It can have an objective meaning
    - Heb 1:3 (nature)
    - Giving substance and reality to something...the real content
  - It can have a subjective meaning
    - Assurance is an example
    - A view point that results or an outcome are absolutely guaranteed
- Both uses work equally well here
  - Faith is the process of assigning substance and reality to something we hope for
  - It is also a view point that sees the obtaining of our hope as assured
- Did you notice that the object of faith was not identified?
  - The writer never specified WHAT the hope must be
    - Apparently, the hope God may offer to one person or the next may vary, but their trust in it will not
    - We'll look more at this in the chapter
- The second half of verse 1 includes another interesting word
  - Eleggchos
    - Proof
    - Faith is proof of something that can't be seen
  - How can faith be proof to others of something that isn't seen?
    - Only if that faith results in some kind of outward demonstration
    - Only when faith is visible can it substitute for something that is unseen

- Finally, the writer says that faith was the way that the elders (fathers) gained approval
  - The word for approval means a good report or testimony
  - In other words, the famous men and women of Jewish history became famous because their faith gave them a testimony
    - Their faith was their testimony
    - And that testimony was approved by God
  - So, let's look at the list
- The writer moves through a list roughly in chronological order
  - Begins with one step of faith common to all men of faith

[Heb. 11:3](#) ¶ 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.

- We must use faith to understand how the world originated
  - No one was there to see it, not even Moses who wrote the story of Genesis
- We must believe that a word from God brought the physical universe into existence from nothing
  - Not from the things we see today
- How does this fit the description of faith
  - We have an assurance that our hope in God's word is true
  - And when we express that faith in His word concerning the creation, we give others proof of our faith in the Word

[Heb. 11:4](#) 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.

- The story of Cain and Abel is interesting
  - You can learn more about it in Gen 1-4
    - Abel gave a sacrifice to God which was accepted by God

- Cain gave a sacrifice which was insufficient to meet God's expectations
- Why did Abel's sacrifice give him a better testimony
  - Well, remember that testimony is a way of saying proof of what you hold true
    - Abel's sacrifice was better because it reflected his faith in God to save him from sin
  - So he acted according to that faith in God's word
    - He gave a blood sacrifice
      - His behavior gave a present reality to the promise of a future blood atonement
      - His behavior became proof of his belief
    - And the testimony we have of Abel in scripture continues to witness to faith in his life even after he is dead
      - This is the power of faith lived out in our lives
  - Cain's sacrifice wasn't a blood sacrifice
    - As such it demonstrated he gave no consideration to God's word concerning the need to atone for sin

[Heb. 11:5](#) 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.

[Heb. 11:6](#) 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.

- Enoch is a story out of Genesis 5, where we hear a brief mention of a man who pleased God in his life, and God rewarded him by taking him up
  - The original Hebrew literally says he was here and then he was not here
    - He did not die but was raptured
    - He passed directly into an incorruptible state
  - One reason to mention Enoch here is, at least in part, is to contrast him with Abel

- Abel is most known as the first murder in scripture
  - While Enoch is known as the first man to not suffer death
- Abel had a good testimony, as did Enoch
  - Abel's witness was that he was pleasing God, according to Gen 4
  - As was Enoch's according to Gen 5
- You can please God and be murdered or be raptured
- What counts in measuring the rewards of your faith is not what happens here
  - But what comes next
- And the writer gives that proof in verse 6
  - Faith must exist before we can please God
    - And specifically, we must believe that God is
      - Not just that He exists, but that He is as He describes Himself in scripture
      - In contrast to how we might cast Him according to our own desires
    - Secondly, our faith must include a trust that He will reward those who seek Him
      - As opposed to those who believe He will reward those who deserve to be rewarded
    - We expect reward on the basis that we sought Him in faith
      - And He promises reward to those who seek Him
      - Not on the basis of what we did to earn His reward
- So we've seen the author's pattern pretty clearly now, so let's move through the rest of the examples a little quicker looking for the pattern

[Heb. 11:7](#) 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.

- Noah is warned about “things not seen”
  - The coming flood and disaster though there had never been rain
  - He responded by building an ark for his family
    - He viewed as reality God’s promise of a coming flood
    - And his actions gave proof to God’s word
      - The ark was a huge testimony of God’s word
      - As such, it condemned the unbelieving world that looked upon it for a year without belief
  - Noah was an heir of righteousness in that his life of faith was the basis to restart the human race

[Heb. 11:8](#) ¶ 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.

[Heb. 11:9](#) 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;

[Heb. 11:10](#) for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

- Abraham received a word from God
  - Go out to an inheritance
    - A land and a people
  - He lived in Canaan but did so as an alien
    - If that was the land God promised him, why did he live his whole life as if he had nothing of value
    - Why didn’t he claim his land and run everyone else off?
  - In fact, his sons, Isaac and Jacob also received the same promise, but they also lived as wanderers in the land
    - They showed proof that they never considered the earth in it’s present form to be their actual inheritance
      - They looked forward to the real inheritance in it’s future form

- The Messiah's Kingdom to come, where the promises to Abraham are finally fulfilled
- So again, they lived as if God's promises were a present reality, giving substance to that promise with their lives
  - And by how they lived, they gave outward proof of what they thought of God's promises

[Heb. 11:11](#) By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

[Heb. 11:12](#) 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.*

- Sarah's example has confused some because it portrays her as having faith in God's ability to bring her a child
  - And yet in Genesis 17 the story of Sarah portrays her as disbelieving as she learns the news of a coming child from God
    - She laughs at the news and says can an old woman bear children?
  - Now the writer sites her as an example of faith
    - The language in Heb is more graphic than the translators chose to represent
    - By faith Sarah received (or collected a deposit) of miracle sperm
      - In other words, By Abraham's faith, even Sarah herself gained in the deal
      - Though she had passed menopause
- She trusted in the promise too
  - If you know the story of Hagar and Ishmael, you might wonder about her faith
    - But it was because she believed that Abraham would have a son, that she tried to obtain that promise another way
    - Her faith in God's promise was sure, but her desire to bring it about in her own power had to be challenged by God

- And so God did great things through the seed that came from Abraham and Sarah's faith

[Heb. 11:13](#) ¶ 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.

[Heb. 11:14](#) For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

[Heb. 11:15](#) And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

[Heb. 11:16](#) 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.

- The writer pauses here to make an important summary point
  - And this point ties back to the end of chapter 10
  - All these (the ones mentioned above) died in faith but without the promises
    - They saw them from afar
    - They believed them and knew they would receive them
      - But they weren't concerned if the fulfillment of those promises didn't come on this side of the grave
  - The promises were the promises of a land a secure dwelling place with God in the promised land
    - We're not talking about heaven, but a literal physical existence on earth in a land that God promised
  - What does it say about someone that they wouldn't even see death as a threat to God's promises for this inheritance?
    - It means they expected to be resurrected to receive the promises
      - They trusted in God's plan of redemption
- The author mentions that they referred to themselves as exiles on the earth
  - So it would seem that they knew they wouldn't receive their inheritance this side of the grave

- And they didn't go back home
  - In other words, they had been called into the land to receive a promise
  - Yet they knew the promise wasn't being fulfilled in their life on earth
  - But that didn't disappoint them nor cause them to doubt or change their mind
    - They stayed put waiting patiently
    - Not ashamed by the fact that they hadn't received what was promised yet, though the world probably mocked them for it
- So think how the writer expects this point to hit his audience?
  - It directly contradicts those who were considering returning to Judaism because they hadn't seen tangible evidence of their inheritance in the New Covenant
  - They were tempted to go home to Judaism, but the writer says their fathers didn't so that

[Heb. 11:17](#) ¶ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*;

[Heb. 11:18](#) *it was he* to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."

[Heb. 11:19](#) He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

- Then the writer shows that faith in God's promises were so strong, that they even cause a man to be willing to sacrifice his only Son
  - And in doing so, provide a ready type of God at work to save men
  - Abraham's faith was so strong that his actions gave proof or testimony to his conviction of resurrection from the dead
  - He didn't consider the death of his son a loss, because he was convinced that his son would return from the dead shortly thereafter if God was to fulfill His promises concerning Isaac

[Heb. 11:20](#) By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.

- The blessing that Isaac gave his sons was given to the wrong ones
  - But after discovering the error, Jacob didn't elect to change the blessings
  - He had faith that his words were intended by God to stick

[Heb. 11:21](#) By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

- When Jacob blessed Joseph's children, he declared they would become Jacob's children
  - Meaning they would become tribes in the nation of Israel
    - A statement of faith in God's promises concerning Joseph's inheritance

[Heb. 11:23](#) ¶ 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.

[Heb. 11:24](#) By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

[Heb. 11:25](#) choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

[Heb. 11:26](#) considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

[Heb. 11:27](#) By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.

[Heb. 11:28](#) By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

[Heb. 11:29](#) 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.

- As you would expect, Moses gets substantial treatment
  - Let's review them quickly
  - The family of Moses hid their child for three months despite dangers because they knew God had a special plan for that child
    - The word for beautiful is a word that has special meaning
    - It's only used to described Moses here and in Acts

- It suggests a special child selected by God for a special purpose
- Then Moses rejected honor and power and wealth to be called a Jew, because of his faith in the God of Jews
  - He didn't count a present reward to be greater than a future inheritance, a reward in verse 26
  - In fact, he decided to accept suffering
    - You can see another object lesson building here for the readers
    - They can't reject their faith because of hardships, especially when Moses illustrates the opposite
- Moses left Egypt out of respect for and faith in God and not out of fear of the Pharaoh
  - The reason he left was because his people rejected him
- Then the Passover and Red Sea passage are held up as quintessential examples of acting according to faith
  - Each represented an overcoming of fear and a trust in God's promises

[Heb. 11:30](#) ¶ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

[Heb. 11:31](#) By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

- The faith of the men of Israel in Joshua's day led them to encircle the city according to God's word
  - Even though it was a seemingly ridiculous thing to do in fighting the city
  - As they arrived at Jericho, Rahab the harlot showed faith in God's promises to secure the land for the Jews by aiding the spies
    - The gentile nations had heard the stories of the Jews exodus and their arrival to obtain the promised land
    - And so when the spies came, she received them and comforted them because she wanted their favor when they took the city
- Finally, a brief recounting of the trials that came with faith

[Heb. 11:32](#) ¶ 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, [Heb. 11:33](#) who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, [Heb. 11:34](#) 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. [Heb. 11:35](#) Women received *back* their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; [Heb. 11:36](#) and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. [Heb. 11:37](#) 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 [Heb. 11:38](#) (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

- We could take time to examine each of these examples in detail
  - But the author's point is to make a broad point about the consistency of faith as the thread that held Israel's heroes together in the face of trials
  - So I think we need to keep the same focus
    - Gideon Barak, Samson, Jephthah are judges known for faith in God's promises
    - The kings of Israel are represented by David
    - The prophets are represented by Samuel
  - These three groups conquered kingdoms by faith, performed works of righteousness, and obtained promises
    - Shutting mouths of lions refers to Daniel, Samson and David, all who encountered wild beasts
    - Quenched fire as did Daniel's friends
      - They had faith to enter the fire, which allowed God the opportunity to allow them to survive it, giving them a testimony of faith
    - Various prophets escaped the sword by following God's instructions, like Elisha

- Others showed special strength or abilities in war, like David vs Goliath
  - Some women received back their dead in a earthly resurrection, like the widow and Elisha
    - While others sought a better resurrection and therefore didn't back down in their faith, like Daniel and his friends
    - The resurrection of the righteous
- And then he gives this long list of trials that the faithful have experienced
  - Suffering of various kinds that were common to the prophets
  - All of this to simply prove that faith has it's reward in another dimension

[Heb. 11:39](#) ¶ And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,  
[Heb. 11:40](#) because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

- Again, the writer summarized how these all gained approval by their faith, but didn't receive their ultimate reward in the form of God's promises of a coming kingdom and a coming Messiah
  - And then he gives the interesting reason why
    - God's plan of redemption for the OT saint depends on the church
      - The Church saints are the key to all those who might be saved and resurrected
    - Apart from us, the writer says, they could not be made perfect
  - The Church is the bride of Christ, and without His bride, the Messiah would not have be able to receive His kingdom
    - According to God's plan
  - So as Israel is the wife of Jehovah
    - So is the Church the bride of the Son
  - And therefore, it was always necessary that the OT be forced to wait for a future time when the promises would be fulfilled

- So this places a greater burden on the NT saints
  - Since that cloud of witnesses is looking down on us waiting for their appointed time based on God's plan for the Church
- The church can't operate any different in the area of faith and practice since the saints of old have been made to wait on our account
  - That's the message to the church that was flirting with a return to unfaithful practices under Judaism
  -