

The Faith of the Family

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (Hebrews 11:1–3; 8–16)

Introduction

1. Last week, we considered God’s purpose to restore His kingdom on earth lost due to the failure of the first Adam.
2. The means God would employ in this process was to bring His Son, Jesus, into the world to be the last Adam.
3. To restore the kingdom, Jesus redeemed a people out of all the nations of the world, establishing with them a particular relationship to Himself—the one relationship He designed for this purpose—the *family*.
4. Jesus is the *founder* of eternal salvation; thus, “*He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified [are ‘all of one’ family]*” (Hebrews 2:11). The proof is that those He saves are variously designated in this passage as *sons* (v. 10), *brothers* (vv. 11, 12), *children* (v. 13) and *Abraham’s descendants* (because Jesus descended from Abraham, v. 16).
5. This new relationship would never have been conceived as possible under the Old Covenant even though there were clear hints. The human tie to God in creation, though not utterly dissolved, is distanced by this closer, dearer tie (Hebrews 2:11).
6. So what do sons of God look like? How do we distinguish them? The answer is quite simple—it is how they live. There is a family resemblance in character and behavior because God’s children walk by *faith* and not by *sight* (2 Corinthians 5:6–10).

I. The Power of *Faith* (Galatians 2:20)

1. Living by faith while we are in the flesh means that we trust the Word of God because we cannot see or observe spiritual things as we do things in the material world. Thus, we must live by faith.
2. Faith is believing and trusting in all that God says about who we are and what we are becoming, especially because we cannot see it now. We believe what He says and trust Him to do all He promises (Hebrews 11:1, 3).
3. Scripture informs us that the unseen realm is already evidenced in our lifestyle in the body of Christ, for “*faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*”
 - a. Believers already live in the world above (Ephesians 2:6; Hebrews 12:22; 1 Peter 2:9; Colossians 3:1, 2).
 - b. When we seek the things above, we are brought into this vital contact with the invisible and distant (Revelation 5:9, 10). Jesus has already “*made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father*” (Revelation 1:6).
 - c. Observe how Hebrews 11 closes: “*And all these [referring to all who previously walked by faith], though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect [or complete]*” (Hebrews 10:39, 40). They are waiting for us to walk our walk of faith. So if they all were able to walk by faith, we must follow their example, for, as we shall see, they may be watching us now. What will they think of us?

II. The Model of Faith

1. Abraham is the OT model of those who do not “*shrink back ... but ... have faith and preserve their souls.*” Abraham walked “*by faith, not by sight*” (Hebrews 11:2). True reality is largely invisible to us because it is *spiritual* reality. Abraham understood this.
 - a. Abraham obeyed God, being called to go out rather blindly (“*not knowing where he was going*”) to an inheritance God promised him but that he would never see in his lifetime. Nevertheless, he walked by faith, obeying God to live in that foreign land because he was “*looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God*” (Hebrews 11:10).
 - b. Paul explained Abraham’s faith and its reward in Romans (Romans 4:16–21).
2. Israel, on the other hand, failed the test of faith through disobedience because they would not believe God.
 - a. Referencing the incident at Kadesh (Numbers 12), Hebrews warns, “*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart*” (3:12–14).
 - b. True faith rests on the *fear of the Lord* because failure to believe is actually disobedience (Hebrews 4:1, 2, 6, 11, 12).
3. “*Let us fear,*” for the fear of the Lord expresses loyalty to Him and a pledge of faithfulness to His covenant. We will still have trials and troubles, but by faith we must pursue the same goal (Hebrews 11:13, 14).

Conclusion

1. Faith, by its very nature, is a gift of God. “*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this [faith] is not your own doing; it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8). As such, faith demonstrates its genuineness in obedience. “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*” (v. 10).
2. Faith is exercised and improved by the believer’s diligence in obeying God’s Word. Hebrews 11 is followed by a series of exhortations:
 - (1) “*Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely*” (12:1a).
 - (2) “*Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus* (v. 1b).
 - (3) “*Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted*” (vv. 3, 4).
 - (4) “*Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed*” (v. 13).
 - (5) “*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*” (v. 14).
 - (6) “*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled*” (v. 15).

Each must examine his own heart before the Lord, asking whether, as a true child of God, he is walking by faith, enduring the trials, seeking the things above, and looking for that promised “*city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God*” (Hebrews 11:10).