

Hebrews Chapter 11A

Pastor Richard Phillips: In his commentary on Hebrews writes:

“The Christian Life is a life of faith. Faith is the issue on which the matter of salvation depends; it is the key that turns the lock on the door to eternal life. Faith is the channel by which we receive the benefits of Christ’s saving work; it is the cup into which God pours his saving grace.”

The 11th chapter of Hebrews, more than any other portion of Scripture deals with this matter of faith. It is this text of Scripture which most carefully defines the nature of faith and most exhaustively describes the working of faith.

- Some have called this chapter “God’s Hall of Fame,” others have called it “The Great Hall of Faith.”
- It contains a listing of the heroes of faith, the honor roll of God’s Saints.
- This is the inspired record of Old Testament Saints who lived by faith in the Word of God and received God’s approval being justified through the means of faith.
- Here we have a listing of historical individuals, who significantly affected our world for the kingdom of God. A survey of the Saints who were mightily used by God in times past.
- In all of their lives there is one common denominator that stands out and that is faith.
- The lives of those individuals described for us in this chapter serve as shining examples of the awesome power, the unbending endurance and radical perseverance which characterizes those who are redeemed by the grace of God through faith in Christ.
- It is these heroes of the faith who make up that great cloud of witnesses spoken of in Hebrews Chapter 12. These are the men and women who encourage us as we run with endurance the race that is set before us.
- Their testimony to us is this, “Put your faith in God and no matter how difficult the circumstance, no matter how great the challenge, no matter how enduring the trial seems to be, **“You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you!”**”
- You can run the race in such a way as to win the prize, and the key to that victory is faith in the Living God!

The faith that is described for us here in Hebrews chapter 11 is the faith of the redeemed, it is a gift of God, a faith that Christ has designed and graciously imparted to the children of God, because He is the **“Author and perfecter of our faith.”**

- Throughout the entire book of Hebrews the Author has labored to identify, to point out or reveal to his readers their great need for faith.

In Chapters 3 & 4 he used the failure of the Wilderness generation to warn them of the tragic cost of unbelief. (*Unbelief is the opposite of faith*)

Hebrews 3: 12 **Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.**

- IN chapter 6 the author strongly exhorts his readers to wake up and actively pursue the promises of God through faith.

Hebrews 6:12 **so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

- And when we closed out chapter 10 the author tells his readers that if they would enter into eternal life it will only be through the possession and exercise of faith.

Hebrews 10: 36 **For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37 For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;**

38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

- Now that the author has clearly communicated the need for faith to his readers he sets out to define, to describe and to illuminate the qualities of saving faith.

In the first three verses of Hebrews 11 the author communicates 3 very important aspects of saving faith.

- The Substance of faith: The essence of faith is described
- The Commendation of faith: The reward of faith is declared
- The Perception of faith. The vision that faith provides.

1 The Substance of Faith

Hebrews 11:1 **Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**

The Bible you hold in your lap may translate the verse a little differently.

- The ESV and the NASV say "Assurance"
- KJV And NKJV use the word "Substance"
- J.B. Phillips uses the wording "Full Confidence"
- Young's literal interpretation simply uses the word "Confidence"
 - You might say, "Does it really matter?"

Differences in wording, provided they remain true to the original text actually help us see the various shades of meaning that come from the original word.

- The original Greek word is (hypostasis) HYPO – Under / STASIS – Standing
- The word Literally describes a strong foundation. It could refer to the foundation of a building. Used figuratively it can be used to describe a firmness of mind, courage or absolute trust.

ESV = Substance: When we think of Faith as the **substance of things hoped for**, we see faith as the firm and substantial reality of that which God has promised.

- Faith is the objective reality, something that is solid, something that is real even though at the present time we can't touch it with our physical hands.

A young lady may wear, an engagement ring which is the promise of marital union on the third finger of her left hand, the love and faithfulness of her betrothed is a present reality even though he is currently serving in the Army. His heart belongs to her and her heart to him even though they cannot touch one another; they share the words of a promise that are the substance of their hope.

The Reformers taught that Biblical Faith possessed 3 Parts:

1. Facts – We place our faith in something that has substance. We hear the Word of God; the Gospel of J.C. in language we understand. (Facts)
2. Conviction – We whole heartedly believe that which we have heard and we give assent to the fact that we are great sinners and Christ is a great Savior.
3. Trust – personally we rely upon, trust in Christ's sacrifice as the full payment for our sin.

Even though we do not see him now, faith in Christ is the substance of the salvation in which we place our hope.

Another translation views faith as the Assurance or Confidence of things hoped for.

- In this light faith is viewed as the attitude or mindset of the redeemed person concerning the promise of God.
- This is evident in all of the O.T. Examples provided for us here in Ch 11.
- The assurance of these Heroes of Faith was such, that they based their entire lives on the promise of God.
- Even though God's promises related to things that were far off in the future they lived and they acted as if the Promise was their present reality.
- I believe this is what Paul was describing when he wrote:

2 Corinthians 5:7 **for we walk by faith, not by sight.**

- By faith we live our lives as if things were radically different than they appear to be. We do this because the Word of God bears more weight in our minds and projects a different reality than our present circumstances.
- Noah was quite certain that God was going to send a flood even though it had never rained on the earth to that point.

Hebrews 11: 7 **By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.**

- Noah was assured by the Word of God that the saving arm of the Lord would rescue him from the wrath that was to come and that assurance significantly affected the way that he lived.

Still another way in which this word may be rendered would be that Faith is the guarantee or attestation of things that are hoped for.

- In secular Greek this word HYPOSTASIS is used for the Title Deed of a property. When used in this way it tells us that faith is the title deed declaring that the blessings of Christ belong to us even though we have not yet taken full custody of them.

Consider Father Abraham who lived as a pilgrim in the land of promise. Even though there were other people who occupied and controlled the land, by faith HE possessed the title deed.

- This is how faith functions within us, it provides us with the real and lasting possessions that we hope for but do not yet fully experience.
- ONE of the possessions that all true believers have received from God is the Righteousness of Christ.

Rom 4:22 (NKJV) (Speaking of the Faith of Abraham Paul says) **And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”** ²³ **Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,** ²⁴ **but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,**

- The righteousness of Christ is credited to or imputed to all who believe those who trust in; rely on the sacrifice of Christ for the remission of sin.

Although we continue to wrestle with temptation, and even though we often give in to that temptation, we possess a righteousness by faith that enables us to stand before God. It is the righteousness of Christ that has been given to us as a gift.

One commentator wrote:

“Faith is the guarantee of the heavenly realities for which we hope; not only does it render them certain for us, but it envisions them as rightfully belonging to us; it is in itself an objective assurance of our definite enjoyment of them. Consequently, faith takes possession by anticipation of these heavenly blessings and is a genuine commencement of the divine life.”

- So faith IS that firm assurance which provides us with a foretaste of the spiritual blessings which we will ultimately experience in their fullness when we see Him face to face.

Now that we have a better understanding of “What Faith Is” let’s move on to see the commendation or reward of faith.

2 The Commendation of faith, the Reward of faith is declared.

Those who believe the Word of God putting their faith in HIM rather than in this present world system are a people that God has chosen for himself; they are the people whom God commends. *That's what the Author is saying here in Vs 2:*

Hebrews 11:2 **For by it (by Faith) the people of old received their commendation.**

The **"People of Old"** the ancients, the elders or forefathers of Israel acting by faith, often in the face of very difficult circumstances, received the honorable testimony, borne to them by the Word of God.

IN every case what is notable about the heroes of faith, listed in Chapter 11 is not their gifts, not their beauty, not their physical strength or popularity, the only thing eliciting any commendation from God, the only thing worth emulating is their faith.

This, by the way, is why you won't find any great monuments erected to Abel, Enoch or Abraham. For the most part the great men and women of faith were people who were scorned and despised by the world.

- Across the board, the heroes of faith have not been interested in the commendations of this world; instead they seek the commendation of God.
- ASK the average person on the street, WHO is Abel? Who is Enoch? I would bet you that most of the church going people don't even know them.
- BUT they received the commendation of God based on FAITH.

Hebrews 11:4 **By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.**

- It was by faith that Abel offered up a better sacrifice and that expression of faith elicited the commendation of God.

Friends, Faith is not simply one of many ways to please God; it is the ONLY way.

Hebrews 11: 6 **And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**

- As we consider the commendation of God in our own lives, I want to remind you
- Of Those words that all true believers long to hear, **"Well done thou good and faithful servant"** are reserved for those who walk by faith and not by sight."

Ok we have heard the essence of faith described, we have felt the joy of the reward of faith as it is declared NOW we will open our eyes to the vision that faith provides.

3 The Perception of faith. The vision that faith provides.

The gift of faith that God graciously gives to his beloved people is not some sort of "Blind Trust" or "Wishful Thinking" it certainly is not "A Leap in The Dark."

When God regenerates a person who was dead in transgressions and sin He literally shatters the darkness giving sight to those who were once blind.

- The Apostle Paul compares the Light given at regeneration to the miracle of creation when he writes to the believers at Corinth.

2Corinthians 4:6 **For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

- Through His spoken Word God opens the eyes of a person who was blinded by sin. You might say that God's gift of faith literally turns on the lights.
- King David would agree:

Ps 119:130 **The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.**

- When God gives light to the darkened soul and imparts knowledge by his Word only then can we understand where we came from and why we are here.

Hebrews 11:3 **By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.**

The existence of man AND the world in which he lives cannot be adequately explained by evidence that is available to our physical eyes.

- There were no human witnesses at the creation of the universe so there is no empirical evidence that can be accurately observed.
- BUT there were three persons (not human) who observed, more than that, three persons who participated in the creation of the material universe, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God

- *We understand* – (NOEO – to see) The word means to perceive in the mind but not through the senses.
- We perceive from God's Word that the universe was created by the Word of God.
- Atheistic Scientists spend their entire lifetime and billions of dollars attempting to discover that which God has clearly communicated in His Word:

Psalm 33: 6 **By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!**

- BUT rather than fearing God and standing in awe of Him as the sovereign creator, the inhabitants of the world chose to trust in the limited intellect of man proving themselves to be fools through their rejection of the one true God.

In childlike faith we believe the testimony of God's unchanging Word and so we understand that we were created in the image of God, to walk with God in righteousness, holiness and joy.

- BUT sin corrupted man to the very core. Leaving him helpless and hopeless.

Ephesians 2:4 **But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved —**

- Has God opened your eyes to see your NEED for forgiveness?
- Has he shown you the Wonder of His Grace in the person of Christ?
- IF NOT today is the day of salvation – repent and believe on the Lord J.C. and you will be saved from the penalty of your sin.

As Christians:

We have been justified by faith (put in a right relationship with God (Romans 5:1)

Our Hearts have been cleansed by faith (Acts 15:9)

We are Sons of God through faith (Galatians 3:26)

Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17)

We walk (live our lives) by faith and not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

This life of faith is not easy we face trials and hardship like all men, BUT by the grace of God and for His glory we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us.

We may experience an unexpected job loss and be tempted to despair. BUT you hold fast to the Word of God.

Php 4:19 **And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

- And the Word of God brings peace to your soul.

When the car breaks down and you are late for work, you open your e-mail to read that you will NOT be receiving a bonus check this year, your wife calls to say that both of the kids are sick and the dog ran away.

- When the daily frustrations knock the wind out of you.. Faith somehow rises up and James reminds you to:

James 1:2 **Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.**

- God is at work transforming you into the image of His Son. He hears your cries and gives you endurance and your faith grows.

You can talk to some of the good folks in this very room who received a cancer diagnosis only to discover that

Isaiah 26:3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

How did Stephanie, Ron and Cookie make it through the death of Steph's son _____? They kept intrusting themselves to the sovereignty God and held fast to the unchanging Word of God.

Romans 8: 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

When the winds of hardship blow against you FAITH holds fast, it is the sure foundation, the substance of things hopes for and the solid evidence of things that are not yet seen.

It is faith that brings the rich reward and commendation of God.

Faith opens the eyes of your heart and you know that God is working in you that which is pleasing to him. For His glory.