

HEBREWS 11 The Life of FAITH -

The Christian life is a life of faith

Those who have come to Christ understand that faith is central to our lives. We also know that our faith is not a feeling or wishful thinking. Our faith is grounded in the historic events and person of Jesus Christ.

We are picking up for real in Hebrews 11.

By way of review for those who are new or have forgotten, Hebrews is a letter in the New Testament. We don't really know who wrote it.

The audience would be those from a Jewish background who have come to put faith in Jesus as the Messiah. It is clear that they are being tempted to abandon Jesus alone for salvation in order to return to the Temple/Tabernacle system of priests, offerings and sacrifices.

The overall theme of Hebrews is that Jesus is better than anything. Better than Moses, better than angels, better than Aaron and the priest of his line. He is a better foundation who offers a better eternal hope.

If this is true, how will you respond?

Hebrews is like a great door that swings on a hinge, which is Chapter 11

Ch 1-10 set the stage and explore the person and meaning of Christ – priest for humanity; he stands in for us to do what we can't do.

Jesus has accomplished something great and will come again without delay. Ch 1-10 past work of Christ; ch 11-13 his return

Faith is a big category. We talk of a "faith" journey in nebulous terms.

How should we NOW LIVE?

"The Righteous shall live by faith."

What does it mean?

Do we really know what it means? It seems rather murky and abstract.

It is about live in this in between time- faith in what God has done.

Ch 11 is longest in book and we'll do a big overview of themes.

First, let's read the whole chapter together –JUST LISTEN OR FOLLOW IN YOUR BIBLES -NASB

As we read I want you to keep in mind this idea regarding how faith informs and shapes our lives...

Obedience is about living in the present as though the future has already arrived. – Tim Mackie

Reading of Hebrews 11 – NO SLIDES – Tom reads alternating with Mary Corbett

1Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. **2**For by it the men of old gained approval.

3By 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. **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. **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.

6And 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.

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.

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. 9By 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; 10for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

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.

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. 14For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16But 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.

17By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; 18it was *he* to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." 19He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. 20By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.

21By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff. 22By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

23By 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. 24By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward

. 27By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. 28By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. 29By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

30By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. 31By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

32And 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, 33who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

35Women received *back* their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; 36and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

37They 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 38(*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground

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

Some much to say but we'll narrow it down to a few things: (Hebrews 11 will take several weeks)

Definition of faith – it is not crystal clear but it is essential for the people of God.

English uses words like – “faith, belief, trust”. It is used some 240 times in the NT.

It is NOT something that is mainly oriented toward thinking or a system of thought, although in our confessional definitions they are primarily focused on belief in Christ alone for salvation.

Heidelberg

21. Q. What is true faith?

A. True faith is a sure knowledge whereby I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word.[1] At the same time it is a firm confidence[2] that not only to others, but also to me,[3] God has granted forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation,[4] out of mere grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.[5] This faith the Holy Spirit works in my heart by the gospel.[6]

WCFSC

Q. 86. *What is faith in Jesus Christ?*

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.

WCF goes into more detail about how faith leads to “yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come.”

Then it goes on to say, “But the principle acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”

Those definitions and doctrines are correct and are well formulated, but as we read Hebrews 11 does it describe people who were just pondering definitions and doctrines?

NO. These are people making profound life changing decisions, some at the risk of their lives. Faith for them was fleshed out in the nitty gritty of their lives. Faith is linked to endurance, action, and to hope.

So, that raises a question for us. Does our “faith” impact our lives? Is our faith integrated into the fabric of our lives so that it shapes the decisions we make? Is our faith linked to endurance and hope in our lives?

Or, is our faith merely something we hold to as a set of words we can say to give a right answer about Jesus or salvation?

Is our faith characterized by seeking after God knowing that HE is a rewarder of those who seek Him? V. 6 (that whole concept may sound odd – seeing God as a rewarder, but that’s what the text says. More about that later)

Faith is about experiencing a reality of what we hope for. It is not a rejecting of reason, but it is more than that. It begins with our minds, but it results in a commitment to a life of action. Faith is multi-faceted and complex.

v. 1-2 A Definition...

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

NASB & ESV translations raise the question, “Is it a mindset and inner confidence? Is it merely an inner response?”

Another translation KJV – faith is the substance or reality of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

i.e. not a mindset, but an experience that gives us a foretaste of what is hoped for.

How are we to interpret?? We are crossing into another world, language, and culture when we read scripture. The use of words back then doesn’t always mean what it does to us today.

Moulton and Milligan – speaking of the varying interpretations they say, **“We find the same central idea of something that underlies visible conditions and guarantees a future possession .And as this is the essential meaning in Hebrews 11:1 we venture to translate this as ‘faith is the title-deed to things hoped for’ ”**

<https://archive.org/details/vocabularyofgree00mouluoft/page/n9>

It is a mindset, but it is more. It opens up an experience to taste the thing hoped for.

EX: Up north in cold weather they snow for months. No green, just brown and gray. Lucky to get any sort of pretty day. March comes and get a 45 degree day which seems warm and people come out in T-shirts. Those warmer days produce the first blooming flowers, such as crocus. Even if it snows again, the crocus survives and gives evidence that winter is passing. It is evidence of what is coming and motivates people to embrace what is coming. It is a foretaste of what is coming.

Faith is like that. An obedience that makes sense in light of the promised future. Spiritually for us, the crocus flower is the Resurrection of Christ. It is the evidence of what is coming.

Romans 1:5 speaks about the “obedience of faith”

4 Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

Obedience is about living in the present as though the future has already arrived. – Tim Mackie

The acts of faith in Hebrews 11 make no sense in light of their current circumstances, but those acts make great sense in light of the promised future in Christ. Their faith is grounded in the eternal realities of all that God is for us in Christ.

So, let’s bring it home to us...

Can you ID an area of your life where obedience makes no sense in light of circumstances, but can only be explained by faith in the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit in your heart?

Are there areas of UNBELIEF that you need to bring before God and cry, “Lord I believe, help my unbelief?”

EX: Forgiveness, finances, generosity, service, repentance, risky radical faith.

Are there faith barriers you are confronting now that may seem crazy, but in the light of the coming new creation would make perfect sense?

This relates to coming to the Table because this sacrament was given to strengthen our faith and to give us an assurance of the eternal truths and promises of Christ.

We come now as a foretaste of the great Marriage supper of the Lamb and we’ll enjoy in heaven.

Now we come by faith. One day we’ll know the fullness of it by sight.

As important as FAITH IS, we are those who are actually looking for the day when faith won’t be necessary. Bruce Hillman puts it this way... (link in sermon notes)

Because we see with blurry vision now we need the gift of faith to help us see what our natural sight can’t. The eyes of faith are like glasses that clear up the foggy vision that reason, experience and science can’t envision But one day—yes, one glorious, majestic, wonderful, graceful, amazing day—we won’t need those glasses of faith because we will see face to face! Faith will die.

<https://www.1517.org/articles/happily-waiting-for-my-faith-to-die>

Jesus descended to dwell among sinners. The only people who can come to Jesus are sinners. The only people invited to Jesus are sinners.

If you don’t see your need, then don’t come. You won’t come.

As we close remember the words of Hebrews 11:6

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.

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