

Hebrews: A Bridge from the Old to the New

Hebrews Chapter 11

Christianity: A Superior Faith

A Description of Genuine Faith (Verses 1-3)

In the first verse, the writer used the Psalm-like poetic style of similar, parallel phrases for emphasis.

- 1-2** Faith involves confidence in hope [*elpizō*: expect with desire], even though the objective of that hope is unseen 2 Corinthians 5:7, because it is eternal 2 Corinthians 4:18 and worth waiting for Romans 8:24-25. Initially, faith is a gift from Jesus Hebrews 12:2, and then when the believer works in concert with Him, that faith is developed and matured through trials James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7. Christians have a glimpse of the hope (Jesus) through the gospels, but genuine faith in the unforeseen hope is what saved the “ancients” [*presbus*: elders] prior to the incarnation of Jesus, and that same type of faith continues to save people today John 20:27-29.
- 3** Having conceptually defined faith ^{v.1-2}, the author begins this verse (and through the chapter) with “By faith”. Ultimately, faith is based in God and His character. His character is not only proven out in His Biblical promises and fulfillment (through His special revelation of the Word of God), but also in the observation and even limited understanding of His Creation (His general revelation). This has particular significance in the fact that since the Creation “was not made out of what was visible” (Latin *ex nihilo*: out of nothing and Hebrew *bârâ*: bring into existence Genesis 1:1), then there is no doubt that He truly is the Creator John 1:3 God.

Old Testament Heroes of the Faith (Verses 4-40)

Adam and Eve were passed over, because they had seen and fellowshiped with God Genesis 2:4-25.

- 4** In contrast to Cain, Abel’s offerings Genesis 4:4-6 came from a heart of loving obedience Matthew 23:35, 1 John 3:12.
- 5-6** In an OT paraphrase Genesis 5:24, the author indicated Enoch was taken to heaven without dying (perhaps prophetically speaking of the rapture 1 Thessalonians 4:17), because he was a faithful man. His faith kept him from not only physical death, but also spiritual death (the second, eternal death John 8:51). Pleasing God is only possible in people who have an obedient faith Romans 1:5, and the first steps in that process are the belief that God exists 1 John 5:10 and that He will reward genuine faith Genesis 15:1, Psalm 58:11, Isaiah 40:10.
- Enoch actually proclaimed the first prophecy concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ Jude 1:14-15.
- 7** Noah believed God and built an ark when He told Noah judgement was coming through a flood Genesis 6:11-7:5. Noah and his family were saved by faith Romans 4:13, because he was a “preacher of righteousness” 2 Peter 2:5.
- 8-10** Abram left his home (Ur of the Chaldeans Genesis 11:31) for an unknown destination in obedience to God’s command Genesis 12:1-9, Acts 7:2-4. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in tents Genesis 13:18, 26:25, 31:25, respectively, because Canaan (the Promised Land) was a temporary earthly home, and only symbolic of their permanent home in the future enduring “city” build by God (the new heaven, New Jerusalem Revelation 21:10-27).

- 11-12** Abraham and Sarah were essentially too old to have a child ^{Genesis 17:1, 18:11}, (both of their bodies being almost “dead” ^{Romans 4:18-19}) and they had some doubts ^{Genesis 17:17, 18:12}, however, Abraham maintained his faith in God’s ability to do it ^{Romans 4:20-22}. Because God is faithful ^{1 Corinthians 1:9, Hebrews 10:23} and He had promised ^{Genesis 17:19}, He fulfilled His commitment with the birth of Isaac ^{Genesis 21:1-3}, and their offspring, in time, became as numerous as the stars in the heavens ^{Genesis 15:5} and the sand on the seashore ^{Genesis 32:12}.
- 13-16** Abraham, Isaac and Jacob longed to see the fulfillment of the promises of God ^{Matthew 13:17}, but they died never having seen any of the covenants fulfilled (e.g., the Abrahamic and New Covenants). While on the earth, all followers of God are aliens and strangers ^{1 Chronicles 29:15, 1 Peter 1:1, 2:11}; even the OT saints that lived in the Promised Land were tenants, because the land belongs to God ^{Leviticus 25:23}. The citizenship of all believers is actually in Heaven ^{Philippians 3:20}, resulting in a desire for the “city to come” ^{Hebrews 13:14} known as the New Jerusalem ^{Revelation 21:2-3}. God was unashamed of being associated with the Jewish Patriarchs ^{Genesis 26:24, 28:13, Exodus 3:6, Matthew 22:32} and Jesus calls Christians His brothers ^{Hebrews 2:11}.
- 17-19** As another proof of his faith, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son in obedience to the command of God ^{Genesis 22:1-18}. This act of faith resulted in Abraham being “considered righteous” ^{James 2:21} by God. With all of the miracles ^{e.g., Genesis 21:5} God performed in his life, Abraham was confident in God’s sovereignty over life ^{John 5:21} and fully expected ^{Genesis 22:5} that if he had to complete the sacrifice of Isaac, God would bring Isaac back to life in order to complete His promises ^{v.18b, quoted from Genesis 21:12}.
- Abraham did have another son (Ishmael), but only one son according to God’s promise (through Sarah).
- 20** Isaac blessed his sons ^{Genesis 27:1-40}, Jacob and Esau, not according to tradition (the best blessing for the firstborn ^{Deuteronomy 21:15-17}), but God allowed the deception of Isaac by Jacob and his mother ^{Genesis 27:5-29}, because Esau “despised his birthright” and sold it to Jacob for some bread and lentil stew ^{Genesis 25:29-34}.
- 21** Jacob not only blessed all of his sons ^{Genesis 49}, he also blessed both of his grandsons by Joseph ^{Genesis 48:5-20}, making them both (Ephraim and Manasseh) tribes of Israel ^{Joshua 14:4}.
- 22** Joseph trusted God for many years through trials and triumphs ^{Genesis 37:1-50:23}, and so before he died, Joseph made “the sons of Israel” swear to take his bones out of Egypt for burial ^{Genesis 50:24-26}. God revealed to Joseph about the impending slavery, but had confidence God would eventually deliver them from bondage.
- 23** Even though the Pharaoh had decreed all male Hebrew children should be killed ^{Exodus 1:16,22}, the parents of Moses recognized he was special and realized the importance of keeping him alive ^{Exodus 2:1-4, Acts 7:20}.
- 24-27** Moses was brought up by Pharaoh’s daughter ^{Exodus 2:5-10, Acts 7:21-22}, but when he was older, he rejected the chance to be rich and chose to be with his Hebrew people ^{Exodus 2:10-15}. And having seeing Jesus (“the image of the invisible God” ^{Colossians 1:15}) in the burning bush ^{Exodus 3:1-4:17, Acts 7:30-34}, Moses risked his life to go back to deliver his people from Egypt ^{Exodus 5} in order to be obedient to God ^{Luke 14:33, Philippians 3:7-11}.
- 28-29** By faith, Moses delivered the people through the Passover ^{Exodus 12:21-28} and the Red Sea ^{Exodus 14:21-31}.
- 30** Joshua obediently led Israel in God’s unorthodox battle plan ^{2 Corinthians 10:4} to destroy Jericho ^{Joshua 6:12-20}.

31 Rahab was a prostitute in a pagan land ^{Leviticus 18:24-25}, but she exhibited trust in God by aiding two Hebrew spies ^{Joshua 2:1-21}, so she was saved ^{Joshua 6:22-25, James 2:25} and is listed in a genealogy of Jesus ^{Matthew 1:5}.

32-38 The author chose to lump many others (judges, prophets and a king) and their behavior, as they accomplished great things through their faith by working with God and for God & His Kingdom.

39-40 All those named in the entire chapter were saved by a faith that led to their obedience, even though they never saw a complete fulfillment of God's promises during their lifetimes ^{Hebrews 11:1}. The greatest of promises, the life and death of Jesus Christ, resulted in the salvation of the OT, as well as the NT, believers.

Leviticus 25:23 The land ... is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.

Isaiah 40:10 See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

John 8:51 I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.

Acts 7:20 At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house.

Romans 1:5 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.

Romans 4:19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was about a hundred years old – and that Sarah's womb was also dead.

Romans 8:24-25 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

2 Corinthians 4:18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 5:7 We live by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 10:4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

James 2:21 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

James 2:25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 John 3:12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

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