

By Faith – The Nature and Necessity of Faith

Hebrews 11

Introduction

1. **Hebrews 11** is one of the most prominent passages of scripture. It is often referred to as “the hall of faith,” or “the roll call of faith.”
 2. The chapter concisely chronicles men and women who expressed great faith in God. There are many similarities, but also each account possesses details which broaden the dimensions of faith for us.
 3. A study of Hebrews 11 should not be merely from a historic perspective, but with the intention of emulating the actions of these spiritual warriors – these were written that we might learn and act ourselves (**cf. Romans 15:4**).
- I. Context in Hebrews
 - A. Hebrews 11 should be carefully considered in its context, not merely as a stand-alone treatise on faith.
 - B. The Hebrews’ Conflict
 - a. Chapters 1-10 (1st half of 10) deal greatly with the doctrinal proof of “better” things of Christ, and the abnegation of the Old Law, and obsolete Mosaic system.
 - b. Warnings of apostasy throughout:
 - i. **Hebrews 2:1-4** – God has spoken through His Son, and we must give earnest heed lest we drift away.
 - ii. **Hebrews 3:6, 12-14** – Jesus is greater than Moses, and we are a part of His house if we hold fast confidence, and not depart from God. (Example of apostasy and destruction of wilderness wandering Israel – **Hebrews 4:11**)
 - iii. **Hebrews 5:12-14** – Reproof of failure to grow spiritually (lack of diligence).
 - iv. **Hebrews 6:4-6** – Warning of the direction their current habits/condition is leading. (Impossible to be renewed to repentance by God’s word spoken.)
 - v. **Hebrews 10:19-31** – encouragement for boldness in approaching God, and warning of willful sin (in forsaking the assembly, falling away, etc.)
 - vi. Ultimately, they were turning away from the figure of Christ back to the outdated shadow – **Hebrews 13:12-13** (Go forth to Jesus and suffer outside the camp.)
 - c. The reason for their slouching toward apostasy – persecution:
 - i. **Hebrews 10:32-34** – experienced persecution (likely from their own countrymen) from the beginning of their faith.
 - ii. Such persecution persisted, but their faith was not persisting.
 - C. The Hebrews’ Call
 - a. He calls them to an endurance of faith.

- b. **Hebrews 10:32-39** – you endured before, don't cast away confidence, reward is great, requires endurance, just live by faith.
 - i. **(v. 38)** – **Habakkuk 2:4**
 - 1. **Romans 1:17** – Paul's quote to emphasize the theme of his epistle – FAITH IS HOW MEN ARE JUSTIFIED.
 - 2. Habakkuk – first, wondered how God could use a nation more wicked than Israel to discipline them, and also wondered how long before they would be delivered.
 - a. Call for those who are just to continue living by faith – *emûnâ* – fidelity, faithfulness, steadfastness.
 - 3. Hebrews – like Habakkuk's original context, a call to steadfastness in fidelity to God. Enduring faithfulness in the midst of adversity.
 - ii. **(v. 39)** – confidence expressed in their return to steadfast faith.
 - c. Hebrews 11 – following up on his admonition with encouraging portraits of faith.
 - i. Designed to wake the readers up to the nature and expectation of their walk with God.
 - ii. It isn't always easy. It isn't without its trials. However, it is filled with hope, and ends in reward. IT IS WORTH THE ENDURANCE OF FAITH.
 - d. **Hebrews 12:1-2** – following up on his examination of faith of "the elders" with encouragement to do the same.
- II. Faith is Not Sight **(vv. 1, 3)**
- A. **2 Corinthians 5:7** – faith implies not seeing its object.
 - B. Relation to Hope **(v. 1a)**
 - a. Substance – *hypostasis* – *hypo* (under), *histēmi* (to stand) – to stand under.
 - i. Foundation – solid foundation which hope rests upon – **"confidence" (3:14).**
 - ii. Support for the hope – noting its reality.
 - b. There is something which undergirds hope or supports it – faith.
 - c. However, faith has an object – what or who the faith is in – **(v. 6)** – obviously God.
 - d. Foundation, or "standing under," "confidence" of our hope is our faith which has its inception in God and His promises – **Hebrews 6:13-19** – Example of Abraham:
 - i. **(vv. 13-15)** – promise and obtaining of such.
 - ii. **(vv. 16-18)** – supply of confidence from God.
 - 1. Immutability of His counsel – unchangeable will – impossible to lie.
 - 2. Used two immutable things to confirm such – OATH (by Himself – greater), PROMISE
 - iii. **(v. 19)** – result for us – sure and steadfast.

1. Substance – enters presence behind the veil for us.
- C. Relation to Things Not Seen **(v. 1b)**
- a. Evidence – *elegchos*; proof, conviction (STRONG)
 - i. Faith by itself proves nothing.
 - ii. However, faith is conviction of things not seen, as it is provoked by evidence.
 - iii. Hebrew writer is saying, “faith is so entire in its persuasion that it needs no further proof.”
 - b. Example of creation – **(v. 3)**:
 - i. **Job 38:4** – were you there? NOBODY WAS – Man created 6th day.
 1. Why would God create man on the last day where he couldn’t see any part of creation?
 2. It was God’s will that man follow Him by faith – **Acts 17:26-27** – God has made it to where we must seek Him to find Him, and He has made Himself able to be found – not far – but takes effort.
 - ii. Only true creation (miraculous):
 1. We create, but only partly – take something which already exists to make something out of it.
 2. God – made something out of nothing – **“THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN WERE NOT MADE OF THINGS WHICH ARE VISIBLE”**
 - a. Something physical cannot come from something physical.
 - b. LAW OF CONSERVATION OF MASS – MATTER CANNOT BE CREATED OR DESTROYED.
 3. **Romans 1:19-20** – what creation reveals – invisible attributes of God.
 - a. **Eternal power** – power which is outside of time (which is created) and does not run down.
 - b. **Godhead** – divinity, the only possessor of such power.
 4. Expression of creative power – **Psalm 33:6; Genesis 1:1** – made by His force of will expressed in word.
 - iii. **We understand this by faith – faith is not the proof of it, but the product of the substantial evidence observed – THE INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION.**

- D. Relation to context of Hebrews – **Hebrews 10:36** – what God has promised may require endurance of great hardship, but it is as real as God, who you believe in. The obtaining of the promise requires and enduring faith in God and His promises by doing His will in response to that confidence He gives.
- a. The reality of persecution should not shake the reality of the promise.
 - b. As sure as you believe in God you should trust in His promises, but they will only be received through faithfulness to Him.

III. Faith is Essential to Pleasing God **(vv. 6, 2)**

A. God Requires Faith

- a. “I won’t believe it unless I see it.” “Seeing is believing.” – Such will never work with God.
- b. God created man with free-will.
- c. Therefore, A NECESSARY PRESUPPOSITION TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS THE DESIRE FOR SUCH WITHIN MAN.
 - i. **Romans 1:21** – the Gentiles did not desire God.
 - ii. **Romans 3:10-11** – the Jews did not desire God.
 - iii. Therefore, their faith did not grow, and they could not possibly please Him.
- d. BELIEVE THAT HE IS – He has never manifested Himself outright – **John 1:18** – none have seen Him.
 - i. Faith is conviction in evidence displayed – **Romans 1:19** – God has shown it to them.
- e. BELIEVE THAT HE IS A REWARDER OF THOSE WHO DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM – He does not reward those who have reached the conclusion of His existence, but those who do something about it.
 - i. Acknowledges God has something to do with man – **Psalm 8:3-5**
 - ii. Acknowledges that God wants to reward man (thus, causes man to come to Him) – **Matthew 7:7-8, 11**
 - iii. Acknowledges God’s requirement of effort – **Philippians 2:12**

B. God Acknowledges Faith

- a. **(v. 2)** – “the elders” those who were before, under the Old Testament, who are given as an example of faith.
- b. **“For by it the men of old gained approval.” (NASB)**
- c. God credits men with faith, and approves/rewards them for it – **Romans 4:3-8** (Abraham justified by faith)
- d. God is not unjust to forget, or not see – **Hebrews 6:9-10**

IV. Faith is Actively Shown **(vv. 2, 6)**

A. The Exemplars of Faith

- a. **(v. 2)** – “the elders” demonstrate faith in action:
 - i. Abel offered, Enoch pleased, Noah prepared, Abraham obeyed, etc.
- b. **(v. 6)** – they were diligent seekers of God.

B. Faith is a Journey

- a. Not a one-time event.
- b. Faith is not contrary to reason – **Acts 26:24-25** (truth and reason)
 - i. Not blind, but conviction based on observable evidence – **Hebrews 11:1**
 - ii. We have good reason to trust in God and follow Him always.
- c. However, faith is proven through trial **(cf. 1 Peter 1:6-9)**:
 - i. Faith is not immune to tests of doubt and despair.
 - ii. Faith triumphs over doubt and despair by God’s grace.

1. It does not yield to these things but seeks to destroy them.
2. This requires honest introspection, and diligent spiritual exercise.
- iii. This great chapter of faith (Hebrews 11) gives wonderful insight into the faith required by God.

Conclusion

1. The essential component in our relationship with God is faith.
2. However, this fundamental subject is sorely misunderstood even by Christians.
3. We need to investigate the inspired and approved examples of faith in order to gain a greater understanding of it.
4. Following lessons will examine such examples in Hebrews 11 with practical application.