

HEBREWS *Fear to Faith*

STUDY 15

Faith's Hall of Fame

[1] *Do you want a greater faith? then consider the promises, which are its native food! Read the story of God's mighty acts in bygone days. Open your heart to God, that He may shine in with his own revealing presence. Ask Him to give you this wondrous faculty to which nothing is impossible. Put away from you aught which might clash with the growth of your heart in faith and love.*

F.B. Meyer *The Way Into the Holiest* p. 138



A. What is faith? [11:1-3]

11:1 What is the paradox of this definition?

[2] [11:1-3] It is important to see this chapter in relation to the preceding context. In chapter 10:22-25 there were three exhortations, respectively to Faith, Hope, and Love. These are elaborated in turn: chapter 11 dealing with Faith; chapter 12 with Hope; chapter 13 with Love. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On* p.140

[3] [11:1] The object of Faith is distinctly intelligible. Faith essentially deals with the future and with the unseen, the regions not entered by direct physical experience. **B.F. Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 352

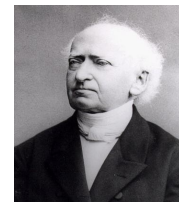
[4] There was one who, next to the apostles, was perhaps the greatest gift of God to the Church, whom we all admire for his faith. And yet Martin Luther was wont to say, "Oh, if I had faith! If I could only believe that God is the Creator! If I could only say in faith, Our Father!" And often he confessed, that unless every day he read the Scriptures, and meditated on Christ, and repeated the Creed, and prayed the Psalms, his heart became dead and cold, full of dark and hard thoughts of God, and of dreary and tormenting doubts and fears. Let us dwell then on Christ; let us consider Him in steadfast, diligent, frequent meditation; let the Word of Christ dwell richly in our hearts, minds, and homes. **Adolph Saphir** *Hebrews* p.711

11:2 What is meant by this statement? (Gen.15:6; Hab.2:3,4; Mal.3:6,7)

[5] [11:2] Then these two things, though apparently inconsistent, do yet perfectly harmonize when we speak of faith; for the Spirit of God shews to us hidden things, the knowledge of which cannot reach our senses: Promised to us is eternal life, but

it is promised to the dead; we are assured of a happy resurrection, but are as yet involved in corruption; we are pronounced just, as yet sin dwells in us; we hear that we are happy, but we are as yet in the midst of many miseries; an abundance of all good things is promised to us, but still we often hunger and thirst; God proclaims that he will come quickly, but he seems deaf when we cry to him. What would become of us were we not supported by hope, and did not our minds emerge out of the midst of darkness above the world through the light of God's word and of his Spirit? Faith, then, is rightly said to be the subsistence or substance of things which are as yet the objects of hope and the evidence of things not seen. **John Calvin** *Hebrews* p.262

[6] [11:2] The [*hoi presbuteroi*] is not to be restricted to the ancient patriarchs and prophets of the primeval and legal periods, but extends to all the heroes and martyrs of faith under the Old Testament down to the Maccabean time, who, by their fidelity and steadfastness under inferior means of grace, became noble examples to the younger generation (ver. 40). All these received honourable testimony, viz. from God, and from the sacred Scriptures recording their exploits and their sufferings ... **Franz Delitzsch** *Hebrews* Vol. 2 p.214



11:3 How does the doctrine of creation demonstrate the superiority of faith to knowledge? (Gen.1; Rev.4:9-11)

[7] [11:3] It expresses a mental as distinguished from a sensuous perception (Mk. 8:17). **B.F. Westcott** *Hebrews* p. 354

[8] [11:3] Here, as in Ch. 1:2, the "worlds" are the *aiones* (literally "ages"); in both places the universe of space and time is meant. There God is said to have made the universe by the agency of the Son; here He is said to have fashioned it by His word. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.280

[9] The doctrines of the Trinity, of man's relation to God, to angels, to the world, of redemption, of the first and second advent, of the future glory, are all most intimately connected with the doctrine of creation; so that here is not only the first lesson which we teach our children, but the ultimate and highest theme of adoration. **Adolph Saphir** *Hebrews* p.719

[10] We see the Scriptures speaks thus of faith in a very deep and comprehensive manner, and that it is indeed a wonderful, mysterious, powerful grace given of God. Inseparably connected with eternal life, the indwelling of God, the witness of the Spirit, the victory over the world, and the imitation of Christ. **Adolph Saphir** *Hebrews* p.710

B. Faith present in prehistory [11:4-12]

11:4-7 How was it that the faith of Abel, Enoch and Noah 'condemned the world'? (Gen.6:5,9-13)

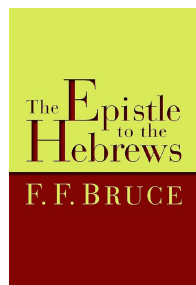
[11] [11:4] But Abel's offering is said to be "by faith," and this was the secret of its greater excellence, for faith is always a response to a divine revelation. God must,

therefore, have spoken about sacrifice and the way of approach to Himself, and many think that there is an allusion to this in God making coats of skins for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On* p.143

[12] [11:4-7] Israel was pre-eminently to be an historical people. They were always exhorted to remember and to consider their history. It was their solemn duty to cherish the memory of the past. The remembrance of the wonderful dealings of God was to be perpetuated from generation to generation. The Jewish nation lived in the remembrance of its early history. The annual festivals, the constantly-recurring sabbath-days, the very names of God, kept the fundamental facts of their marvellous history before their minds, and impressed them on their hearts. ... To remember the past, and to wait for the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, was the attitude of God's children; thus Malachi concludes by pointing back to God's servant Moses on mount Horeb, and by pointing forwards to Elijah preparing the advent of Jehovah. **Adolph Saphir** *Hebrews* p.729-731

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11:8-12 Despite their failures, how did Abraham and Sarah demonstrate radical faith? (Gen.15:6; 21:1-7)



[13] [11:8] Abraham's faith was manifested first of all by the readiness with which he left his home at the call of God, for the promise of a new home which he had never seen before and which, even after he entered it, he never possessed in person. "By faith Abraham ... obeyed"; faith and obedience are inseparable in man's relation to God. If the patriarchal narrative says in one place God confirms to Isaac the promise made to Abraham "because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5). He would not have obeyed the divine call had he not taken God at His word; his obedience was the outward evidence of his inward faith. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.295

c. The faith of the fathers [11:13-22]

11:13-16 Why is God not ashamed to be called the God of liars, cheats and schemers?

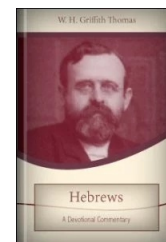
[14] [11:16] The earthly Canaan and the earthly Jerusalem were but temporary object-lessons pointing to the saints' everlasting rest, the well-founded city of God. Those who put their trust in God receive a full reward, and that reward must belong not to this transient world-order but to the enduring order which participates in the life of God. ... Yet those who have shared most truly the otherworldliness of the

patriarchs have not been unpractical people, too heavenly-minded to be of any earthly use. Abraham's neighbours were enriched by the presence of this wandering stranger in their midst; when the territory of some of them was devastated by an invading army on one occasion, it was "Abram the Hebrew" who took immediate and effective action to deal with the situation. There have indeed many occasions when practical men of the world have been thankful to saints and mystics for timely help in an emergency beyond their own power to cope with. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.305

11:17-22 Do we find a chronological coincidence in our author's choice of 'faith' examples?

[15] [11:21] It is noteworthy that, while Jacob is in many ways the least exemplary of the three, God is called the God of Jacob much more frequently in the Bible than He is called the God of Abraham or of Isaac. For all his short-comings, Jacob had a true sense of spiritual values which sprang from his faith in God. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.307

[16] [11:22] It is also interesting to observe that Joseph is here mentioned in connection with the end of his life. Notwithstanding all that surrounded him in Egypt he had respect to the future in the fulfilment of God's promises about the return to Canaan. In these three instances the men were at the close of their days, and yet their hearts were full of expectation, their faith was indeed the "substance of things hoped for." **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On* p.148





11:19 Note a detail not mentioned in Genesis

[17] Abraham, however, as a man of faith, held tenaciously to the conviction that what appeared to him to be an insoluble problem was for God no problem at all. Though everything else was obscure, one thing was clear to him, namely, that God, whose word was unshakeably true, had a way of resolving the problem which was as yet unrevealed. Like the apostle Paul in a later age, Abraham was assured that it is precisely the powerlessness of man which provides the opportunity for the triumphant manifestation of the omnipotence of God. **P. E. Hughes** *Hebrews* p. 483

'The divine glasses' – faith, purity and love

[18] Society rests on the faith which man has in man. The workman, toiling through the week for the wage which he believes he will receive; the passenger, procuring a ticket for a distant town, because he believes the statements of the time-tables; the sailor, steering his bark with unerring accuracy in murky weather, because he believes in the mercantile charts and tables; the entire system of monetary credit, by which vast sums circulate from hand to hand without the use of a single coin – all these are illustrations of the immense importance of faith in the affairs of men.



Nothing, therefore, is more disastrous for an individual or a community than for its credit to be impaired, or its confidence shaken. **F.B. Meyer** *The Way Into the Holiest* p. 137

[19] Faith is that strange faculty by which man feels the presence of the Invisible; exactly as some animals have the power of seeing in the dark. That is the difference between the Christian and the world. **F.W. Robertson**

[20] You may have strong, eagle-eyed faith: well, you will probably be enabled to do great things in life, to work wonders, to trample on impossibilities. You may have sanguine hope: well, your life will pass brightly, not gloomily. But the vision of God as He is, to see the King in His beauty, is vouchsafed not to science, nor to talent, to only to purity and love. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." **F.W. Robertson**