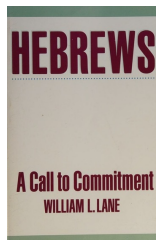


HEBREWS *Fear to Faith*

STUDY 16

Approaching through Affliction



[1] *The Christians who are addressed in Hebrews were struggling with the cost of discipleship. Sometimes we find ourselves precisely in a similar situation. Whenever I find myself in that place I turn to Hebrews. There I am called to consider the cost of discipleship in the light of Jesus' endurance of the Cross, and to affirm my identification with Jesus Christ.*

William Lane *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment* p. 23

A. The faith of Moses [11:23-29]

11:23-26 Why is the faith of Moses so remarkable? (Eccl.2:12,25)

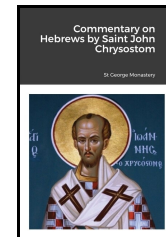
[2] [11:26] *The reproach of the Christ* is the reproach which belongs to Him who is the appointed envoy of God to a rebellious world. This reproach which was endured in the highest degree by Christ Jesus (Rom. 15:3) was endured also by those who in any degree prefigured or represented Him, those, that is, in whom He partially manifested and manifests Himself, those who live in Him and in whom He lives. **Brooke Foss Westcott**, *Hebrews* p.374

11:27-29 Here is the secret of endurance and sacrifice (11:1,3,6; Ex.3:14-18; Jer.23:23,24)

[3] [11:27] Moses, the leader of the people, left the safe though servile shelter and support of Egypt, casting himself on the protection of the unseen God against the certain vengeance of the king in the fulfilment of his arduous and self-sacrificing work. **Brooke Foss Westcott**, *Hebrews* p.375

[4] [11:28] The faith of Moses calls for special attention from all who would live the life of trust. We see three things: (a) Faith's vision. Moses saw through temporal things and penetrated to eternal realities because he saw God (v.27). (b) Faith's value. Moses chose, reckoned, separated himself, and determined to do the will of God. (c) Faith's victory. He overcame the world as represented by Egypt, the opposition of Pharaoh, and the power of his own natural tendencies as he was tempted by the glories of Egypt. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On* p.150

[5] Thus Chrysostom insists that even Moses' flight was an act of faith and that for him to have stayed in Egypt at that time would not only have been foolish and senseless but would also have been in a devilish manner, contrary to faith, to put God to the test ... Peter Lombard and Aquinas comment to the same effect. Indeed, as there is a time for every matter (Eccl. 3:1ff.), so there is a time for flight and time for confrontation, as Moses' life illustrates, and as we see above all in the conduct of Christ himself who on more than one occasion disengaged himself from those who were about to put him to death "because his hour had not yet come" (see Jn. 7:30; 8:20, 59; 10:31-39), but who, when the hour arrived in which the purpose of his coming into the world was to be fulfilled, faced without flinching his cruel accusers and the agony of the cross (see Jn. 12:27; Mk. 8:31; 10:33f., par.). **Philip E. Hughes** *Hebrews* p.499



B. By faith they overcame [11:30-40]

11:30,31 How does the 'genocide' accusation founder on these facts? (Deut.20:10-18)

[6] The next example of faith is the most surprising that we have met thus far – Rahab, the harlot of Jericho. Yet this is not the only place in the New Testament where she receives honorable mention for her faith: in Jas. 2:25 her kindly treatment of Joshua's spies is one of two arguments for the thesis that faith without works is dead, the other argument being Abraham's offering up of Isaac. In fact Rahab, despite her antecedents, enjoys a place of esteem in Jewish and Christian records ... Attempts were made in antiquity to give her a more respectable calling; thus Josephus makes her the keeper of an inn,

Why do they feel obligated to whitewash Rahab?

as does also the Targum of Jonathan at Josh 2:1... Rashi in his commentary makes her a seller of food. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 328

[7] [11:30,31] The list of the champions of Faith whose victories are specially noticed is closed by a woman and a gentile and an outcast. In this there is a significant foreshadowing of its essential universality. **Brooke Foss Westcott**, *Hebrews* p.377

11:32-34 Notice by far the majority of these examples involve conflict

[9] And what of Jephthah, commander of the Transjordanian tribes against the Ammonites? Posterity remembers him chiefly for his rash vow; yet, rash as it was, it was a token of his sincere though uninstructed devotion to the God of Israel. The message which he sent to the king of Ammon (Judg. 11:14-27), with its historical retrospect reaching back to the Exodus and wilderness wanderings, expresses his appreciation of Yahweh's guidance of His people ... **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 332

11:35-38 The faith of the former involved some prosperity, but what is the lot of these latter unnamed?

[10] [11:35,36] According to a widely accepted tradition, which a number of the patristic authors repeat, the prophet Jeremiah was stoned to death in Egypt by his fellow Jews. The tradition that the prophet Isaiah suffered death by being *sawn in two* with a wooden saw is also found in the patristic writings, as well as in the Talmudic books and in the pseudepigraphic Jewish work *The Martyrdom of Isaiah* in which it is recounted that during this terrible ordeal "Isaiah neither cried aloud nor wept, but his lips spoke with the Holy Spirit until he was sawn in two." **Philip E. Hughes** *Hebrews* p.514

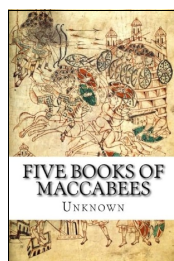
11:39,40 What is the accomplishment of the Old Testament faithful? (John 15:18-25; 17:14-16)

[11] The chapter tells us how faith accomplishes results. It is due solely to the fact that God is the object of faith. Faith is convinced that God exists (v.6), is capable of bestowing blessing (v.6), is faithful (v. 11), is able (v. 19), and is ever present with His people (v. 27). Some one has said that the believer, like David of old, has five pebbles available for use: God is, God has, God does, God can, God will. All these are clearly and abundantly illustrated in this wonderful chapter. **W.H.Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On* p.154

[12] They did great things; but those things are upon record only as they were wrought by faith; yet their faith was weak, and laboured under many infirmities. Look into the 11th of the Hebrews; there is no mention made of Samson's infirmities, nor of Rahab's. Mention is made of their faith, but their infirmities passed by, and not one mentioned; and all the great things which they did were mentioned only upon the account of faith. **Adolph Saphir** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p.782

Faith heroes of the Maccabean age

[8] [11:35,36] One such hero of the faith in the Maccabean period was Eleazar, an aged scribe, who, refusing release at the cost of compromising his profession, "welcomed death with renown rather than life with pollution" and "of his own accord advanced to the instrument of torture" (2 Macc. 6:18ff.). The account of Eleazar's death is followed by that of the martyrdom of seven brothers and their mother. The brutal tortures they chose to endure rather than renounce the truth and defile themselves by eating swine's flesh in order to gain their release included tearing out the tongue, scalping, mutilation, and frying over the flames (2 Macc. 7:4ff.), and the instruments used by their interrogators in the attempt to break the spirit of those and other indomitable martyrs were, the chronicler tells us, wheels, joint-dislocators, racks, bone-crushers, catapults, cauldrons, braziers, thumbscrews, iron claws, wedges, and branding irons (4 Macc. 7:12). Their expectation of a better resurrection was expressed in the words uttered by one of the brothers: "The King



of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws," and in the manner in which the mother exhorted her sons to suffer and die without flinching: "The Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again" (2 Macc. 7:9, 23). So also the youngest brother, when his turn came to suffer and die, confidently testified to Antiochus the king that his brothers, now dead, "after enduring their brief pain, now drink of ever-flowing life, by virtue of God's covenant" (2 Macc. 7:36 JB). **Philip E. Hughes** *Hebrews* p.512

c. Looking to Jesus [12:1-2]

12:1 What is the likely meaning of 'great cloud of witnesses'? What 'weights' must we all learn to identify?

[13] This is one of the early examples of the beginning of the semantic change by which the ordinary Greek word for "witness" acquired its distinctive Christian sense of "martyr" – a change which we find so thoroughly established by the time we come



to Origen's *Exhortation to Martyrdom* (c. A.D. 235) that he uses the word, without feeling himself under any necessity to explain why he so uses it, of "one who of his own free choice chooses to die for the sake of religion" rather than save his life by renouncing it. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 347

[14] [12:1] The writer seems to have in his mind the manifold encumbrances of society and business which would be likely to hinder a Christian convert. The duty of the convert would be to free himself from associations and engagements which, however innocent in themselves, hindered the freedom of his action. **Brooke Foss Westcott**, *Hebrews* p.395

'Great cloud of witnesses' – in what sense?

[18] In surveying the men and women whose faith was exhibited so signally in pre-Christian ages, our author has said repeatedly that they "had witness borne to them" by virtue of their faith; to them all, as to Abel, God Himself bore witness. But now they in turn are called witnesses. A "cloud" of witnesses is a good classical locution for a "host" of witnesses. But in what sense are they "witnesses"? Not, probably, in the sense of spectators, watching their successors as they in their turn run the race for which they have entered; but rather in the sense that by their loyalty and endurance they have borne witness to the possibilities of the life of faith. It is not so much they who look at us as we who look to them – for encouragement. They have borne witness to the faithfulness of God; they were, in a manner of speaking, witnesses to Christ before His incarnation, for they lived in the good of that promise which has been realized in Him. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 346

[15] [12:1-3] The athlete must discipline himself; he must divest himself of all superfluous weight, not only of heavy objects carried about the body but of excess bodily weight. There are many things which may be perfectly all right in their own way, but which hinder a competitor in the race of faith; they are “weights” which must be laid aside. It may well be that what is a hindrance to one entrant in this spiritual contest is not a hindrance to another; each must learn for himself what in his case is a weight or impediment. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p. 350

[16] [12:1,2] There are many things in the Christian life that may be called “weights,” involving choice rather than obligation. Some one is recorded to have asked whether a certain thing would do a person harm, and the reply was given, “No harm, if you do not wish to win.” There are many things in life which have to be set aside if we would realize to the full the will of God for us. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On* p.156

12:2 Is there significance to the choice of appellation for the object of our meditation?

[17] [12:2] The encouragement to be drawn from earthly witnesses passes into the supreme encouragement which springs from the contemplation of Christ. Above the ‘cloud of witnesses,’ who encompass us, is our King, no Roman Emperor dispensing by his arbitrary will life or death to the stricken combatant, but One Who has Himself sustained the struggle which we bear ... Christ in His humanity – *Jesus* – is ‘the leader and consummator of faith.’ To him our eyes are to be turned while we look away from every rival attraction. From Him we learn Faith. **Brooke Foss Westcott**, *Hebrews* pp.396, 397