

Hebrews Chapter Eleven (vv.1-3)

Context

The verses which **precede** (10.32-39) and **follow** (12.1-11) Hebrews 11 have the common theme of *endurance in the midst of sufferings*. Hebrews 11 provides examples of those who have remained steadfast through persecutions and trials.

10.38: True believers are characterised by **faith**. 'The just shall live by faith' is quoted in Romans 1.17 and Galatians 3.11, the emphasis being placed on the words 'just' and 'faith', i.e. 'it is he who is righteous by faith that will live (eternally)'. In contrast, both Habakkuk and the writer to the Hebrews emphasise the word 'live', the truth being that the believer lives (presently) **by** the principle of faith. **Faith** is the influencing power in their lives (Galatians 2.20, Hebrews 11.6).

10.39: Living by faith leads to the 'preservation' ('saving') of one's soul, both presently and eternally (1 Thessalonians 5.9). In its **present** aspect, the continual preservation of the soul and full enjoyment of salvation is by faith. *Faith saves the soul from eternal ruin and is necessary to save the life from shipwreck*. That this is the continuing thought of Hebrews 11 is indicated by the use of the word 'now' or 'moreover' in 11.1. The chapter will demonstrate that faith: **sets** the foundation of all spiritual life (vv.1-7); **separates** from the world (vv.8-16); **supplies** confidence for the future (vv.17-22) and **strengthens** under trial (vv.23-40). These were all important truths that the writer has emphasised to his readers throughout the epistle and now seeks to exemplify in practice.

Chapter 12 furnishes us with the supreme example of faith, the Lord Jesus. He began and finished the perfect race of faith and thus encourages us to endure in the same.

What is Faith?

Faith is **practical confidence in God** (see 10.35-36). The **object** of the Christian's faith is God. Such is our confidence in Him that we accept His **word** and **act** upon it. Faith derives from the revealed word of God (Romans 10.17).

David Newell: 'Faith is not a leap in the dark, but a step into the light, for it involves confidence in One who cannot lie.'

Anonymous: 'God says it, I believe it, that settles it!'

Albert Leckie: 'Faith doesn't say it could be, or it must be. Faith says it is.'

CH Spurgeon: 'Little faith will bring your soul to heaven; great faith will bring heaven to your soul.'

CH Spurgeon: 'Faith is the silver thread upon which the pearls of grace are strung.'

EW Kenyon: 'Faith will lead you where you cannot walk. Reason has never been a mountain climber.'

Outlines of Hebrews 11

Very simply Hebrews 11 is *one volume* of God's mighty men and women of faith with *two bookends*. These might be entitled: Faith **Stated** (vv.1-3), Faith **Surveyed** (vv.4-38) and Faith **Summarised** (vv.39-40).

10.3-7: The *Antediluvian* Section. *The faithful few were **doing** what no one else would do.*

10.8-22: The *Patriarchal* Section. *The faithful few were **looking** for what no one else was looking.*

10.23-29: The *Mosaic* Section. *The faithful few were **choosing** what no one else would choose.*

10.30-39: The *Promised Land* Section. *The faithful few were **enduring** what no one else would endure.*

10.40-12.3: The *Present Day* Section. *The faithful few are **running** the race in which no one else was running.*

There is much of Christ in the chapter. He can be seen as: the Righteous One (Abel), Rejected One (Noah), Received One (Enoch), Stranger and Pilgrim (Abraham), the Sacrifice (Isaac), the Servant (Jacob) and the Apostle and Prophet (Moses).

The chapter can also be divided according to the great men and women who are named throughout. Many are the themes which might be studied:

Name	Verse/s	... of Faith	Faith that	True Faith...
Abel	4	Worship	Justifies	Sacrifices
Enoch	5, 6	Walk/Witness	Sanctifies	Seeks
Noah	7	Work	Testifies	Serves
Abraham (1)	8, 9, 10	Walk/Waiting	shows Enterprise	Sojourns
Sarah	11, 12	Willingness	Multiplies	Strengthens
Patriarchs	13, 14, 15, 16	Welcome		Sustains

Name	Verse/s	... of Faith	Faith that	True Faith...
Abraham (2)	17, 18, 19			<i>Submits</i>
Isaac	20	<i>Words</i>	<i>Looks onward</i>	<i>Secures</i>
Jacob	21		<i>Looks upward</i>	
Joseph	22		<i>Looks homeward</i>	
Moses	23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28	<i>Wisdom</i>		<i>Satisfies</i>
Israel	29, 30	<i>Way/Warfare</i>		<i>Sanctifies</i>
Rahab	31	<i>Welcome</i>	<i>Receives</i>	<i>Saves</i>
Victors	32, 33, 34		<i>Achieves</i>	<i>Succeeds</i>
Martyrs	35, 36, 37		<i>Endures and Assures</i>	<i>Suffers</i>
Pilgrims	38			<i>Separates</i>

Faith Described (vv.1-3)

1 *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

These initial verses are **not** so much a definition of faith (this is in 10.35) as a description of faith's **power** and **effect**. The **character** and **nature** of faith is primarily in view. Faith is the 'substance' or 'substantiates' and 'gives confidence' regarding 'things hoped for'. Our hope includes: full and final salvation (9.28), eternal rest (4.1-11) and eternal inheritance (9.15). Faith makes these things to become **fact** and **reality** instead of matters of mere expectation. This faith is exemplified in Abraham who looked for a heavenly city (v.10, 16). So **real** was His faith in God's promises that he lived as a stranger and pilgrim in anticipation of the fulfilment of God's word (v.13).

Faith is also the 'evidence' or 'conviction' (see John 8.46) of things not seen as yet. Faith 'furnishes proof' or brings reality to the heart of things outside the range of our physical senses. *Matthew Henry: Faith demonstrates to the eye of the mind the reality of those things which cannot be discerned by the eye of the body.* See 2 Kings 6.16-17. This faith is exemplified in Noah who prepared an ark, for the saving of his house, from a great deluge which as yet had not been seen (or even rain, 11.7)! See also Moses who lived 'as seeing him who is invisible' (11.27). Is our faith as real as this? I believe that Christ will return at any moment. Do I live like it? I believe that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Am I separate? I believe that God will supply all my need. Do I yet worry about tomorrow?

2 *For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

By means of this kind of faith (v.1) the 'elders' (saints of the OT, called 'fathers', Hebrews 1.1, and 'these all', v.39) 'obtained a good report'. That is, they were 'attested' by or 'gained approval' from God for their faith. This witness was recorded in the word of God by the Spirit of God. See God's witness of Abel (v.4) and Enoch (v.5). Men may be *despised* and *reproached* in the **world**, but true faith will result in *approval* from **God**. True faith worships God (v.4), pleases God (v.5), seeks after God (v.6), works for God (v.7), obeys God (v.8) etc. Would we have a good report?

3 *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

It is through faith 'we understand' or 'perceive with the mind'. Faith in God's word is the route to intelligent understanding of the truth. The natural man wants to understand first, then believe. Christians believe God's word first, then understanding follows. In this verse faith enables us to apprehend things which are high above the reach of human reason. Scientists, philosophers or evolutionists cannot explain the origin of the universe; faith can! We understand that the 'worlds' (the universe of time and space) were 'perfectly joined together' and 'prepared' ('framed') by the spoken word of God (*rhema*). This same spoken word (Genesis 1.3) not only brought matter and time into existence but also maintains or upholds the universe (Hebrews 1.3). Things which are seen (the worlds) were not derived from any pre-existing physical material or natural phenomenon. The inference is that some invisible power brought the worlds into being, i.e. **God's word** called creation into being from nothing. *The visible came forth from the invisible. God took a handful of nothing from nowhere and made it into something and put it somewhere.* Faith must begin with the acknowledgement of a Divine and Infinite Creator. Faith must begin with God-consciousness (Acts 14.15).