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Hebrews 11:1-22

Having finished up with the subject of persevering in their faith to live the life of Christ by quoting Habakkuk, “The just shall live by faith”, he now will focus and do a thorough exposition on faith.. Heb. 10:38; Hab. 2:4

The author is attempting to provoke these Hebrew Christians to a life of faith in Christ by their heritage in this “Hall of Faith”, who persevered in their faith through some of the most horrible things men and women can go through.

1. He will describe faith for us. Heb. 11:1-3
2. He will give testimony of various dimensions of faith in the lives of Old Testament saints. Heb. 11:4-40

Their persecution and difficulties were causing them to return to animal sacrifices and the Law, so the prophet Habakkuk and these witnesses are a witness to them, “The just shall live by faith”. Hab. 2:4

* Dr. Griffith Thomas points out that the exhortation of 10:22-25 is expounded on in these last three chapters.

1. Ch. 11 faith.
2. Ch. 12 hope.
3. Ch. 13 love.

1:1-3 The declaration of faith.

11:1 The essence of faith.

- 1) Faith is the substance of things hoped for.
 - a) The word faith “pistis” means conviction of the truth and it is in reference to faith in Jesus. Heb. 6:12
 - b) The word substance “hupostasis” means confidence or assurance as a firm foundation.
 - c) Faith does not give or create but is trusting in God in what He says.
 - d) Faith is not a leap into darkness but a step into the light giving sure hope.
- 2) The evidence of things not seen.
 - a) The word evidence “elegchos” means conviction, persuasion or proof.
 - 1)) It is objective hope, not subjective, something God has revealed or promised, believed and acted on as proof of the reality.
 - 2)) This is the emphasis of the entire chapter, faith is active in obedience, such as believing in the coming of Christ. Heb. 10:35-39
 - b) In other words faith is the assured confident expectation and conviction of things not seen as if one had seen them as Noah. vs. 7

- 3) Faith is related and the result of God's word, His revelation. Heb. 10:36-39a
- a) Faith is the key from the beginning but it must be based on God's revelation. Heb. 1:1-2; 6:1, 12
 - b) Faith believes what is revealed in Scripture, past, present and future, faith does not create these things.
 - c) Faith believes the past, trusts for the present and has confident about the future.
 - d) Today there is great error being taught regarding faith by defining it as the power to create your own reality, called "Word of faith movement", "Seed faith" or "Positive Confession".
- 4) These Hebrew Christians were to be confidently persuaded regarding the hope in Jesus and His return as Messiah.

11:2 The people of faith.

- 1) The elders were men of faith.
 - * The elders "prebuteros" were usually the older men who led and ruled a congregation, city, but in context it is the ancestors and fathers of the past of which some will be listed.
- 2) The elders by faith obtained a good testimony.
 - a) A good testimony "martureo" means a witness well attested, reliable and

true of faith by the approval of God. Heb. 7:8, 17; 10:15; 11:2, 4, 5, 39

- b) The elders obtained a good witness before God through the most horrible of events. Heb. 11:35-38
- c) Paul says, "We do not look at the things which are **seen**, but at the things which are not **seen**. For the things which are **seen** are temporary, but the things which are not **seen** are eternal...we live by faith not by sight". 2Cor. 4:18; 5:7

11:3 The example of faith.

- 1) The author includes himself, "we" understand, this is the only time in the chapter.
 - * The word understand "noeo" is not mere vision but perception of the mind consequent upon seeing. Rom. 1:20
- 2) That the worlds were framed by the word of God. vs. 3a
 - a) The worlds "aion" means two things.
 - 1))The various ages of time from Eden, the ante-deluvial, the Patriarchs, etc, sovereignly and according to their lengths.
 - 2)) The ages material universe, not the manner but the fact that He created it.

- b) These worlds were framed “katartizo”, to put in proper order, by the spoken word of God to fulfill His purposes and plan of redemption. Heb. 10:5; 13:21
- 3) So that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. vs. 3b
- a) In other words, the believer sees and understands, in this case the origin of the universe, as being spoken forth by the word of God, not because they could hear and see it but by faith accepting the fact as true and reliable when they read it in the opening verse of Genesis. Gen. 1
- 1)) In the beginning God created “bara”, made from nothing. Gen. 1:1
- 2)) The word for word “rhema” is the spoken word.
- b) The visible world is made up of invisible things, the molecular structure that we cannot see of atoms, with neutrons, protons and electrons.
- c) This is confirmed by science but contrary to men of science who speculate and theorize, defying science and God’s revelation.
- d) God is creator and sustainer. Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:3

11:4-40 The testimony of various dimensions of faith in the lives of Old Testament saints.

- 1) Some important things about faith.
- a) It is based on God’s revelation.
- b) It is evident by obedience.
- c) It is active.
- d) It is in reference to the person of Jesus.
- e) The description of faith in verse one will be evident in all of the accounts of the people of faith.
- 2) The Hall of Faith begins with Abel and continues in a chronological order till verse thirty-two, with the exception of David and Samuel. LXX
- a) The anti-deluvial flood witnesses of faith. Vs. 4-7
- b) The Patriarchal witnesses of faith. vs. 8-22
- c) The Mosaic witnesses of faith. vs. 23-31
- d) The miscellaneous witnesses of faith. vs. 32-40

11:4-7 *The anti-diluvium flood witnesses of faith.*

11:4 The witness of Abel.

- 1) By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.
- a) The comparison is that they both had access to God.

- b) The contrast is that one came by faith, the other with lack of faith, quality.
- 2) Through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. Gen. 4:4
 - a) Many have debated on the difference of their offerings but the text tells us why, by faith, he was more righteous, in right standing before God! Heb. 10:38; Hab. 2:4; Matt. 23:35
 - b) God asked Cain why he was angry and his countenance fallen. Gen. 4:6-7
 - 1)) He also told him if he did well he would be accepted (repentance)
 - 2)) He warned Cain about sin that wanted to master him.
 - 3)) The New Testament commentary calls Cain "that wicked one". 1Jn. 3:12
- 3) And through it he being dead still speaks.
 - a) Abel still speaks to us through the Scriptures that God approved his sacrifice on the basis of his faith.
 - b) All who approach God, according to His revelation and right a attitude are exercising faith.
- 4) These Hebrew Christians were to like Abel believe the revelation of God about Jesus in faith, in order to be righteous and accepted, not animal sacrifices.

11:5 The witness of Enoch.

- 1) By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death. vs. 5a
 - a) The phrase taken away "metatithemi" means to be transposed, transferred or translated.
 - b) Enoch was translated to heaven without ever experiencing physical death. Gen. 5:1-31
 - c) Enoch was the seventh from Adam who prophesied of God coming in judgment with 10,000 of His saint. Jude. 14-15
- 2) And was not found, because God took him. Vs. 5b-c
 - * The focus is not his translation to heaven but his testimony!
- 3) For before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. vs. 5d-e
 - a) How did he please God?
 - b) Genesis says he walked with God for 300 years after he begot Methuselah. Gen. 5:21-24
 - c) Walking speaks of fellowship with God, after his sons birth Enoch in faith believed the revelation of a Messiah and turned from his sin and obeyed God.
 - d) Enoch's faith did not translate him but his faith pleased God, He then sovereignly took him!

* This is a permanent testimony that continues to speak how God is pleased, regardless of the years!

e) Elijah was translated also. 2Kings 2

4) These Hebrew Christians were to be like Enoch and please God by faith in Jesus Christ resulting in access to God in order to walk with God in fellowship.

* For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Eph. 2:18

11:6 The preeminent principle of faith.

1) The proclamation of faith, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him”, Heb. 10:38; Ha. 2:4

a) Faith is the universal principle that results in obedience to His revelation, pleasing God!

b) The word impossible means exactly that every time it appears in Hebrews, the context dictating the impossibility!

2) The proof of faith is two-fold.

a) “For he who comes to God must believe that He is”, He is God and all that He reveals about Himself.

b) “And that He is a rewarder of those who **diligently** seek Him”, that He will be true to His word.

3) These Hebrews were to follow this principle believing that Jesus was God

and Messiah, so as to receive the blessings of salvation.

11:7 The witness of Noah.

1) By faith Noah being divinely warned of things not yet seen. vs. 7a-b

a) He believed what God revealed to Him about the destruction of the entire world due to evil.

b) He believed it was going to rain sufficient to flood the entire world.

1)) This was the revelation by faith persuaded him of things he had not yet seen!

2)) Regardless of the preposterous and unimaginable possibility, he trusted God’s word with full conviction.

2) Moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household. vs. 7c-d

* This was the response and evidence of his faith. Gen. 6:13, 7:13

a) He moved with godly fear “eulabeomai” reverence belief and obedience to the revelation.

b) He prepared an ark for the saving of his household, his faith was active faith.

c) His family also believed God.

- 1)) Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord and walked whole-hearted with God. Gen. 6:8-9
- 2)) James says faith without works is dead. Ja. 2:20
- 3) By which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Vs. 7e
 - a) He condemned the evil world by his faith in what He reveals and being a preacher of righteousness. 2Pet. 2:5
* God allowed 12 years to warn man.
 - b) He became an heir of righteousness, that is his faith was accounted to him for righteousness by simply believing God's revelation of judgment to come and excepting the only way of escape.
* Abraham believed God's revelation by faith and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Rom. 4:3
 - c) The result of Noah's faith was three-fold:
 - 1)) He saved his household.
 - 2)) He condemned the world.
 - 3)) He became heir of righteousness.
 - a)) Jesus referred to Noah to illustrate his 2nd coming. Matt. 24:36-42
 - b)) The promise of his coming. Heb. 10:37

- 4) These Hebrew Christians were to move with godly fear of the coming judgment on sinful man and take the only way of escape, faith in Jesus Christ. Heb. 1:1-2

11:8-22 *The Patriarchal witnesses of faith.*

11:8 The witness of Abraham in obedience.

- 1) By faith Abraham when he was called to go out, he believed God called him.
- 2) By faith Abraham was called out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. Gen. 12:1-5
 - a) He responded to the call.
 - b) He obeyed to go out.
- 3) By faith Abraham went out not knowing where he was going.
* The word knowing "epistomai", means to put one's attention on, to fix one's thoughts.

11:9 The witness of Abraham in contentment.

- 1) By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country.
* As a stranger in a land other than his own!
- 2) By faith he dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob. Gen. 12:8; 13:3; 18:1

- a) All three were heirs of the same promise.
- b) Pilgrims and sojourners. 1Pet. 1:1; 2:11
- c) We are citizenship in heaven. Phil 3:20

11:10 The reason behind the pilgrimage of Abraham.

- 1) Abraham's expectation was the heavenly kingdom of God as is goal, not an earthly one!
- 2) Many times our faith waivers because we have our eyes and hopes on the earthly temporal things.
- 3) Once again these Hebrew-Christians were to follow Abraham's example, the father of faith.
 - a) To respond to the call of Christ.
 - b) To obey to come out the shadows into the light.
 - c) To recognize they are pilgrims dwelling in tents.
 - d) To get their eyes on the heavenly city. Heb. 12:22; 13:14; Gal. 4:26

11:11 The witness of Sarah.

- 1) By faith Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and bore a child when she was past the age. Rom. 4:17-21
* Gen. 17:15-21; 18:8-15; 21:1-7

- 2) By faith she judged him faithful who had promised. Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 32:12
* Sara laughed at the thought, yet God calls her a woman of faith on the basis of her life. Gen. 18:13

11:12 The witness of God's faithfulness.

- 1) God did a miracle through the natural process, "Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead".
 - a) Abraham was 100 years old. Gen. 21:5
 - b) Sarah was past met pause.
- 2) God fulfilled His promise by allowing to be born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. Rom. 4:18-21
 - a) About 2-3 million Jews came out of the exodus of Egypt.
 - b) God's ways are not our ways, faith is believing God's revelation of his word, not understanding or knowing how He will do it.
- 3) So these Hebrew -Christians were not to rely on their understanding but faith in the promise of God and to see themselves as part of the multitude promised to Abraham.

11:13-14 The reality of these patriarchs faith.

- 1) Now all these mentioned died according to faith, not having received the promises in their ultimate fulfillment. (negative) vs. 13
- 2) They saw them afar off and were assured of them. (positive) persuaded of them. vs. 13
- 3) Therefore they did two things as a witness to their faith. vs. 13
 - a) They embraced them, meaning to greet or salute as a seaman seeing his homeland afar off, evidence of vision.
 - b) They confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, having proper perspective of reality.
- 4) Their lives declared an obvious message! vs. 14
 - a) They see themselves as those who are merely passing through.
 - b) They are on a journey seeking a homeland.

11:15 The total abandonment of the Patriarchs.

- 1) Their abandonment is marked by the certainty of the Patriarch's faith.
- 2) If they were looking to return to their place of origin, they could of but of their free-will chose not to. vs. 15

- 3) Ur of the Chaldeans was a very prosperous commerce center but idolatrous.
- 2) They longed for much better country. vs. 16
 - a) A heavenly country.
 - b) For that reason, God is not ashamed to be called their God.
 - c) For God has prepared a city for them, according to the promise. Rev. 21

11:16 The total commitment of the Patriarchs in faith.

- 1) Their point of destination was God and His city!
 - a) They desired a better country.
 - b) They desired a heavenly country.
- 2) Because of their faith in God's promises He is not ashamed to be called their God.
- 3) Because of their faith God has prepared for them a city. Jn. 14:1-2
- 4) Is your faith based on God's revealed word?
 - * Then you will be able to see the invisible and beyond what you can reason and obey!
- 5) Are you looking for a city whose builder and maker is God?
 - * Then your life will declare plainly that message!
- 6) Now, three important things about faith!

- a) It is based on God's revelation, not presumptuousness, self-confidence or feelings.
- b) It is evident by obedience to God's revelation.
- c) It is active manifesting works.

11:17-19 The witness of Abraham's heart surrender.

11:17 The witness of Abraham trust.

- 1) By faith Abraham when he was tested, offered up Isaac. Gen. 22:1-14
 - a) To offered up was in the act of obedience to God's revelation.
 - b) Tested "peirazo" means to put to the test in order to prove character and steadfastness.
 - c) Used of Jesus in the wilderness. Math. 4:1
 - d) Let no man say I am tempted of God... Ja. 1:13-15
 - e) God always gives a way of escape. 1Cor. 10:13
- 2) By faith he offered of his only Son.
 - a) God didn't recognize Ishmael, the work of the flesh.
 - b) The promise was made to Abraham.

11:18 The line of Abraham was through Isaac.

- 1) The faith of these Hebrew-Christians in Jesus would confirm that they were Isaac's seed.
- 2) Long-term wise in the Kingdom Age, the nation of Israel.

11:19 The faith of Abraham was reasonable.

- 1) That God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, not that he would! Gen. 22:5
 - a) Here we get the reason for Abraham obedient faith.
 - b) "And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."
- 2) Abraham received him in a figurative sense or a type of Christ Jesus.
 - a) God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering. Gen. 22:8; Jn. 1:29
 - b) Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see... Jn. 8:56
 - c) The prophetic picture of Jesus, two-thousand years later, on the same mount, at the top of Calvary!
 - * Blessed are your eyes which see the things which you see. For many prophets and Kings desired... Lk. 10:2-24,
 - d) Testimony of faith tested severely yet triumphant!

11:20-22 The faith of the Patriarchs.

- 1) By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau about things to come. vs. 20
* Gen. 27:27-40
- 2) By faith Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, Ephraim the younger over the first-born Manasseh. vs. 21
* Gen. 48:11-20
 - a) His staff in the Hebrew is bed. LXX
 - b) The idea is one of reverence and respect towards God.
- 3) By faith Joseph mentioned the departing. Vs. 22
* Gen. 50:24-25
 - a) They died with hope because they lived by faith!
 - b) I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning those who have died in Christ as others who have no hope! 1Thess. 4:13