

# Hebrews 11

## Hebrews 11.1-3

**V1 – Do you know of any famous halls of fame?** Baseball, snow skiing (Ishpeming, Michigan), football, rock and roll (Cleveland), etc.

-**What was weakness of the Hebrew Christians, as shown in *Hebrews 10*?** Not being faithful in attendance (this had led them to begin to fall away from the gospel)

-So they needed to be encouraged to get back to work for the Lord

-**What is the definition of faith given here?** Assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen

-**What are the things hoped for by Christians?** Heaven and its joys

-**How can we have the assurance of heaven?** By reading the Bible and seeing the "footsteps" of God through the universe

-**What does "conviction" mean?** Willing to suffer for our beliefs

**V2 – How did the faithful people of the Old Testament gain approval from God?** By their faith

**V3 – What is the basis of our belief in the Christian world view?** Faith

-**How did God create the world?** Made the visible out of the invisible (not what the world calls the Big Bang)

-Notice: "*The world that is seen*" – **Read Romans 1.18-23**

-The observable universe proves the existence of God (the order, as in eclipses)

-So faith in God is not like believing in fairy-tales - it is not a make-believe religion (as is Hinduism or Greek mythology or Mormonism)

## Hebrews 11.4-7

**V4 – What person did the writer start with in demonstrating faith?** Abel

-**Why did he start with Abel?** He acted on his faith

-**What was his action?** He offered a sacrifice to God (definite action)

-**What did God testify about Abel?** That he was righteous

-**What can be said about Abel today?** He is dead, but he still speaks

-**Read 1 Corinthians 15.29** – baptism for the dead

-We can be influenced by the faith of Christians who have died, because their example of living is still with us and encourages us when we think about them

**V5 – Who was used next as an illustration?** Enoch – **Read Genesis 5.21-24**

-**According to *Genesis 5*, what did Enoch do to be pleasing to God?** Walked with God (notice the action)

-**How was Enoch rewarded for his faith?** Did not have to go through death

-Again the emphasis is on action and working for God

**V6 – How important is faith?** Necessary in order to please God

-**What is the first step to faith?** Believing in God

-**Next step?** Believing that he will reward those who seek him

-Many people believe in God, but they don't seek him (don't care about being pleasing to him)

**V 7 – What did God warn Noah about?** Things not yet seen (such as rain and the flood)

-**How does this show the great faith of Noah?** He had never seen rain before (*Genesis 2.6*).

-**What did Noah do as a result of his faith?** Built the ark (notice the action again)

-**In what sense did Noah condemn the world?** His righteous life was in contrast to the wickedness of the people around him

-It is the same today with the Christians in the workplace and the neighborhood

-**How was Noah rewarded?** He became an heir of righteousness which is according to faith

## **Hebrews 11.8-12**

**V 8 – Who is the next person in the hall of fame?** Abraham

-**How did Abraham respond to God's command?** By going out from his home

-**Where was his home?** Ur of Chaldees

-**How much faith did Abraham have?** Tremendous faith – he had never been to Palestine (Canaan or the Promised Land)

-**Did Abraham even know where he was going?** No (imagine the conversation that night between Abraham and Sarah)

**V 9 – What was Abraham's attitude as he lived his life in Palestine?** An alien and a foreigner

-**What emphasized the temporary status of Abraham?** Lived in tents (never in a house)

-Great lesson here for Christians, that we too are aliens in this life

-**Who followed the example of Abraham?** Son Isaac and grandson Jacob

-**Did they always believe in the promise?** Yes

**V 10 – Why did Abraham consider his life in the Promised Land to be temporary?** He was looking for a better place

-**How is that better place described?** The city with foundations whose architect and builder is God

-**Why would the writer of *Hebrews* say those things?** Because the Jews worshipped Jerusalem and considered it to be a holy city, but Abraham was looking for an eternal city (obviously not Jerusalem)

-For the premillennialists, they still worship Jerusalem and say that Christ will come back to that city and rule from there for a thousand years – a false doctrine!

-Many people in the U.S. still think that Jerusalem is the "holy city" and needs to be defended by U.S. funds and weapons, but any defense of Jerusalem is a political question, not a Scriptural one

**V 11 – How was Sarah blessed by God?** Conceived a child in her old age (she had passed through menopause and past the age when women can have children)

-**Why was she blessed with a child?** Because she believed in the promises of God and had faith

**V 12 – What was the ultimate result of Abraham and Sarah's faith?** Many descendants (like sand on the seashore)

-**Message?** God blesses those who act upon their faith

## **Hebrews 11.13-16**

**V 13** – What a powerful verse!

- Not only did they die in faith, but under which dispensation did they die?** Patriarchal Age (not even Law of Moses)
- Did those great people of the Old Testament get their reward in this life?** No
- How close did they come to the reward in this life?** They could see it from a distance
- So how did they view this life?** They were strangers and exiles on the earth

**V 14** – **Was the Promised Land the country that Abraham was seeking?** No, they were looking for a country of their own (eternal life) – notice again the message to First Century Jews in love with Jerusalem and the premillennialists today

**V 15** – **How did Abraham think about Ur of the Chaldees?** Where he had come from, but he did not want to return there

- Could he have returned there?** Yes

**V 16** – **So why didn't Abraham return to Ur?** Because he was looking for the better country

- How is the better country identified here?** The heavenly country
- What was God's attitude toward those great people?** He was not ashamed to be called their God
- What a passage! – We should always act today in such a way that God will not be ashamed of us, that he will be proud to be called our God
- How did God respond to their faith?** He has prepared a city for them (*John 14.1-4* talks about Christ preparing a place for us also)

## **Hebrews 11.17-20**

**V 17** – **What did Abraham do when God tested him?** Offered up Isaac

- Was Isaac actually offered up on the altar?** No
- Then in what sense was he offered?** Abraham was going to do it
- Why was this offering of Isaac so important?** Because he was the true son through whom the promises were to come
- Was Isaac Abraham's only begotten son?** No, Ishmael was born first
- What does this tell us about "only begotten son"?** A title of a great honor
- See *Colossians 1.18* – same usage there for Christ
- See also *Psalms 89.27* – David called "First Born" (but not literally)
- The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Jesus was a created being, because of this verse – but "first born" was a title of honor and was not to be taken literally

**V 18** – The promise was to come through Isaac

**V 19** – **Why was Abraham going to offer up Isaac?** Because he believed that God would raise him from the dead

- Where there any examples of resurrections from the dead before Isaac?** Not that this writer

knows of

**-So why did Abraham believe that God was going to raise Isaac from the dead?** That was the only way he could figure out how God was going to save Isaac

**-How was Isaac a “type” or symbol?** For Jesus Christ, Son of God (actually offered up and then raised from the dead)

**V 20 – Why did the writer say this?** Because Isaac lived through the experience and eventually blessed Jacob and Esau

**-What things was the writer trying to get across here?** That God’s blessings began long before the Law of Moses and that God has always required people who claim to have faith to act upon that faith

## **Hebrews 11.21-22**

**V 21 – What is said about Jacob?** He blessed his sons (*Genesis 48.11-20*)

**-What is the meaning of the staff?** In the Old Testament, Jesus is sometimes referred to as the staff of Judah

**V 22 – What is said about Joseph?** Looked forward to the Exodus (future)

**-What message did Joseph leave about his body?** To be taken to the Promised Land when the Exodus came

**-Message?** They were not at home where they lived

## **Hebrews 11.23-29**

**V 23 – What happened when Moses was born?** He was hidden by his parents

**-Why?** They were not afraid of the king who had ordered all baby boys to be killed

**-What does this indicate about the faith of Abraham’s parents?** An active working faith

**-Are all babies beautiful?** Yes, in the eyes of God and in the eyes of their parents, and Moses was a beautiful baby

**V 24 – What decision did Moses make when he was grown?** No longer to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter

**-Why was he called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter in the first place?** Because she rescued him as a baby

**V 25 – What did he choose to do?** He chose to suffer with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin

**-What did the writer say about the pleasures of sin?** Passing and temporary (so true)

**-For example, look at those who smoke – it is a temporary pleasure, but deadly in the long run**

**V 26 – Meaning?** He would rather be reproached (or rebuked) by Christ, than receive the praise of the Egyptians

**-Why?** Because he was looking for the eternal reward

**-How did Abraham know about Christ?** *Genesis 1, 3.15*

**V 27 – What else did he do because of his faith?** Left Egypt

-**Could Moses see God?** No - He was unseen (this is a reference to God the Father, not God the Son)

**V 28 – What else did Moses do because of his faith?** Kept the First Passover

-**Why?** So that the first born of Israel would not be killed

**V 29 – What else did they do because of their faith?** Walked through the Red Sea

-Think about the faith that it must have taken to walk between those two walls of water

-**What happened to the Egyptians soldiers?** They drowned

## **Hebrews 11.30-31**

**V 30 – What is the next example of faith that produced great action?** The walls of Jericho

-**Would the walls of Jericho have fallen down without the marching around for seven days?**

No

**V 31 – Who was Rahab?** A prostitute of Jericho

-**How did she save herself?** By believing in the one true God and acting on that faith by taking in the spies that Joshua had sent out and obeying the instructions sent by Joshua through the spies

## **Hebrews 11.32-36**

**V 32 – How long would this book have been if the writer had told the whole story about those characters?** Very long

-Approximately how many days from the life of Christ are recorded in the Four Gospels? About 42 days

-**How many pages does it take to record those 42 days?** NASB (my edition): 119 pages

-**How many pages would it have taken to record everything that Christ did while on earth (a trick question)?** *John 21.25* – the world could not have held that many books

-We remember that Carl Sandburg (great Illinois poet) wrote about the life of Abraham Lincoln

-**How much did he write just on the life of Lincoln?** 6 volumes (thick books)

-**Has anyone ever worked with the Catholic Encyclopedia?** (It is available on-line)

-It has 10,000 articles and fills up 19 volumes (the latest edition)

-It gives a very honest history of the Catholic Church (a cappella music until 800's AD, etc.)

-**What "restrained" the 40 writers of the Bible?** The Holy Spirit

-It takes tremendous power to keep things brief (as all public speakers know)

-So the writer of *Hebrews* said that there is not enough time left to describe the lives of the Old Testament heroes in detail

**First hero: Gideon (Judges 6-8 – the 5<sup>th</sup> judge of Israel)**

-**How many men volunteered to help him defeat the Midianites?** 32,000

-**How did he first cut down the number?** He told everyone who was afraid to go home

-**How many left?** 22,000 people left - That left 10,000

-**What was the next test?** Told people to drink water from a stream

- What were the two ways of drinking?** Most lapped the water (like a dog)
- Others?** Cupped hand and raised the water to their mouths (were more cautious)
- How many remained?** 300
- What was his battle strategy?** All soldiers were given trumpets and a clay pot to put over a torch
- Then at the appropriate time, they blew their trumpets and screamed (in Hebrew): *For the Lord and for Gideon (Judges 7.18)* and terrorized the camp of the Midianites, who fled in panic

**Next hero: Barak (Judges 4-5)**

- The one that Deborah inspired to go into battle with the Canaanites (even though he would not receive the glory, but Deborah would) – See *New International Commentary, Hebrews*, p. 330

**Next hero: Samson (the 12<sup>th</sup> judge of Israel – Judges 13.15)**

- Why is he listed as a hero of the Old Testament?** He did bring down the roof on the Philistines and kill 3000 of them (and did other acts of courage)
- Did he have any weaknesses in his life?** Yes, with women, especially Delilah

**Next hero: Jephthah (the 8<sup>th</sup> judge of Israel – Judges 10-12)**

- What is he known for?** For making a bad mistake about sacrificing the first thing that came out his door when he returned from the defeat of the Ammonites
- See *Leviticus 27.1-8* about making a rash vow and fulfilling it by giving his daughter to service in the tabernacle for the rest of her life (with no marriage) – See *Judges 11.39*

**Next hero: David, second king of Israel**

- Who were the other kings over the 12 tribes of Israel?** Saul and Solomon
- What were they not included in Heb. 11?** Both were weak and wicked

**Next hero: Samuel (1 Sam 1-7ff)**

- He established a school for the prophets (a "school of preaching" today); he ended the period of the Judges and was a prophet and priest to Saul and supported David when he was in the process of becoming the next king of the 12 Tribes

**V 33 – What did they do with their faith?**

- Conquered kingdoms (the ancient tribes, etc., especially in the book of *Joshua*)
- When David was king, his kingdom stretched from the border with Egypt to the Euphrates River
- Received promises from God
- What promises did God make to them?** That as long as they were righteous, God would bless them (*Psalms 97.2*), that "he would draw near to them, if they would draw near to him"
- Shut mouths of lions
- Who shut the mouths of lions?** Samson and David (by killing lions), Daniel (by calming them down, so that they would not attack him)

**V 34 – What else did they do?**

- Quenched the power of fire – Details?** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in *Daniel 3*
- Escaped the edge of the sword?** David in escaping death by the hand of Saul/Elijah escaping from Jezebel
- From weakness were made strong?** Gideon was the least in his father's household; remember when Samuel went to appoint the next king from the sons of Jesse
- Became mighty in war - David
- Put foreign armies to flight - Joshua
- These were weak men who were made strong by their faith in God

**V 35 – Which women received back their dead?** Resurrection of son of the widow of Zarephath by Elijah (*1 Kings 17.23*), and the resurrection of the son of the Shunammite woman by Elisha (*2 Kings 4.6ff*)

-**What did some of the heroes of the Old Testament endure?** Torture

-**Who was the first person in the Old Testament to die for his faith?** Abel (*Matt. 23.35/Luke 11.51*)

-**Why did Abel and Zechariah die for their faith?** Because they believed that what was on the other side of death was more important than what was on this side of death

**V 36 – What else did some of them endure?**

-Mockings

-Scourgings

-Chains

-Imprisonment

-**Point of this section?** Those Old Testament heroes were persecuted by the Jews, but their faith held strong, and they did not give up the vision of receiving heaven

## **Hebrews 11.37-38**

**V 37 – How else were those heroes of the Old Testament treated?**

-Stoned to death (the rabbies believed this to be the way of death for the prophet Jeremiah)

-Sawn in two (they also taught that this was the way of death of Isaiah)

-Tempted

-Put to death with the sword

-Clothed only in sheepskins and goatskins – Elijah (and John the Baptist)

-Being destitute (remember Jesus said that he did not a place to lay his head at night)

-Afflicted

-Ill-treated

-**Financially, what was their life like?** Terrible – no homes, having to live in caves and holes in the ground

**V 38 – One of the greatest statements in the Bible: "...men of whom the world was not worthy"**

-In other words, the world did not deserve to have such great people as these (I have known some great Christians in our times like that)

-**What did they have in terms of housing?**

-Wandering in deserts and mountains

-Caves

-Holes in the ground

## **Hebrews 11.39-40**

**V 39 – In spite of their dedication, what happened?** They did not receive the reward of being in the New Testament Church and of experiencing permanent forgiveness of their sins in this life

-**So what has been the goal of the writer of *Hebrews* throughout this chapter?** To encourage

the New Testament Christians to be more faithful (as in *Hebrews 10:25*)

**V 40 – What was still to come for those great people?** Salvation through Jesus Christ

-In other words, it is only through the New Testament church that these heroes of the faith have been able to obtain salvation

**Messages of this chapter:**

1. They were wrong in trusting in Jerusalem as a “holy city” – It would soon be destroyed
2. The only faith that counts is an active faith
3. Those heroes of the Old Testament were still not as blessed as Christians are under the New Covenant

**Modern day heroes of the faith:**

- J. M. McCaleb
- Sarah Andrews
- Otis Gatewood
- Fausto Salvoni....

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