

The Superiority of Christ

Jesus – the Creator of Faith

Hebrews 11:1-3

Introduction

Hebrews chapter 11 has been called the hall of fame, the chapter of the heroes of faith, the honor roll of the Old Testament saints, the Westminster Abbey of Scripture, the faith chapter, and many more. The 11th chapter of Hebrews deals with the superiority of faith.

In the first ten chapters of the Book of Hebrews, the writer seeks to prove one central point, that the new covenant, sealed with Jesus' blood at Calvary, is in every way superior to the old covenant. Christ is better than the prophets, angels, Moses and the Law, Joshua and the Promised Rest, Aaron and the Levitical priesthood, and all the Old Testament covenants. Jesus is a better sacrifice and sealed us with a better covenant. The goal of the first ten chapters is to prove Christ is better than everything connected with the old covenant and prove to the Jews that the new covenant is the best covenant.

The writer warns the Jews who know this to respond to the new covenant while their hearts are still sensitive. Some were wavering in faith within the Jewish Christian community and tempted to return to Judaism and abandon their faith in Christ. The Book of Hebrews tells them to take hold of and embrace the new covenant.

The Jews were regimented to a system of works based on the Mosaic Law for the past 1600 years. Should they just forget about that and accept the new covenant Jesus institutes based on grace? In the new covenant, there are no more sacrifices to make, no feast days required to observe, no ritual washings to go through, no ceremonial observances, no circumcision required, and no memorization of the Law. Can you see the problem?

The first-century Jew saw everything as a matter of works. So even after the writer shows them how this new covenant is a blessing, it was still very tempting for them to try and earn it. Some Christians, even today, work very hard to try and earn their salvation even though we are under the new covenant.

The Judaism of the first century was no longer the supernatural system God gave Israel at the beginning. God's faith promises had become twisted into a religious system of works-oriented salvation. God gave the Law was to convince the Jews they needed faith like Abraham's to be saved. The Jews, however, added all kinds of legalistic requirements to the original faith-based system God gave them. In the time of Christ, Judaism had become nothing more than a religious cult built on legalism. It had become a system of salvation by works.

In Genesis 15, it says Abraham "believed in the LORD, and He (God) accounted it to him for righteousness. ([Genesis 15:6 NKJV](#))

Romans 4:2 says, "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS."
(Romans 4:2-3 NKJV)

The Hebrew writer quotes from the Book of Habakkuk 2:4 in Verse 38, when he writes, "Now, the just shall live by faith." Life in Christ is a life lived by faith. But then comes the warning in verse 39, "But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." (Hebrews 10:39 NKJV)

The Jews were so bogged down in works that it was hard for them to understand faith. In Chapter 11, we find a list of all the heroes of Israel. But each of them is introduced by the phrase, "By faith!" The writer emphasizes that faith is the only way to receive the new covenant.

All the Old Testament leaders were people of faith. Chapter 11 states the nature of faith in the first two words. What are they? "Now faith!" Faith operates in the present, not in the past - and not in the future. Faith is now! God is always present. He is the "I Am," not the "I Was" or "I Will Be." God is not a creation of time. He has always been, and always will be, in the present. It all begins with, "Now faith."

Then he mentions two aspects of faith that are so closely related it's almost impossible to separate them. They are "The substance of things hoped for" and "the evidence of things not seen." It is more of a statement of the characteristics of faith than a definition of faith.

The Discovery Bible says faith *is* "title" to what God leads believers to hope for (what pleases Him) – which always brings a "divine assurance" (invisible confirmation) of His will (Heb 11:1).

Hebrews 11:1-3 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." (Hebrews 11:1-3 NKJV)

The Hebrew writer says the nature of faith is that it is the substance of things hoped for. But the faith of God makes them real to us. Faith causes us to believe in what we hope for; therefore, faith gives hope a present substance. Even in the Old Testament, many people had nothing but the promises of God to rest upon.

God said a Messiah was coming who would finally take away sin. He also said there was coming a day when Israel would have its own kingdom, and the Messiah would reign over it when the land would be restored to Israel. God said through Ezekiel, "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a

heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*." (Ezekiel 36:25-27 NKJV)

God goes on to say, "I will gather you in the land, and you will have peace and safety." Many a Jew hoped for it, and every Jewish mother longed to be the mother of the Messiah. Many Jews still hope for that freedom and liberty even though Israel is being bombarded by outside pressure of a hostile world.

Faith lives in a hope so real it gives it substance even though it is yet for a future time. In our time, Israel is beginning to see it and long for it!

Hebrews 11 says the promises given to the Old Testament saints were so real that even though they never saw them, they based their lives on them sight unseen. Many of the Old Testament promises related to the future, but the people of faith acted as if they were in the present tense. They took God at His word and lived by God's Word. They were people of faith.

Faith is an absolute certainty. When we follow the revelation of the unseen God, our hope becomes a substance in the present tense. That is the intensity of our faith! It causes us to serve a God we've never seen, whose audible voice we've never heard, a Christ whose face we've never seen, whose form we've never touched. Why? Because of Faith. We follow Christ even though we may experience pain, though there may be loss, though we may encounter discomfort, be unpopular, face persecution, or lose our very lives? Why? Because of Faith.

Faith stands against the world system. Verse 26 says that Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward." (Hebrews 11:26 NKJV)

Moses' faith rested upon the Messianic hope. It caused him to forsake all the treasures of Egypt and face persecution for a Messiah that wasn't going to come for several thousand years.

In the Book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar gives Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego a choice. Bow down to an idol or face a fiery furnace.

Many people think that the chief end of life is pleasure. But people of faith would rather face hardship in this world and be glorified forever in the next. We don't live in fear saying, "I hope things work out." We know they will. That's Faith.

Faith is for today. Hope is for tomorrow. Faith makes the hope of yesterday a reality today! Hope is the confident expectation that what God reveals in promise today will be a reality in the future. Faith can take a future reality and give it present substance. Hope provides a firm assurance while we wait for the fulfillment of God's promise.

Romans 8:24 says, "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do

not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance." (Romans 8:24-25 NKJV)

We know our salvation is real now because we believe it to be a reality in the future when we are with the Lord forever. If you believe that God's promised future is for real, then you'll patiently wait for it.

Verse 13 says of the Old Testament saints, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13 NKJV)

They saw heaven with the eye of faith. They believed it and embraced it, saying, "We are just pilgrims passing through this life on our way to a city whose builder and maker is God." That's the part of faith that gives present reality to what we hope for in the future.

The second part says that faith is "the evidence of things not seen." Faith is the conviction that the unseen exists. With hope, you live your life on the promise of a future. By faith, you live each day in the reality of something that cannot be seen.

Jesus told Thomas, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29 NKJV)

God told Noah that water would drop out of the sky and cover the whole earth. Noah believed what God promised would become a reality. That's the first step. He put his hope for the future in the present reality of God's revelation based upon the faithfulness of God in the past. But he didn't stop there – he built a boat. That's the conviction that takes faith a step further.

It's one thing to try and picture what rain might be like, but it's something else to base your life on it and for 120 years, build a ship in the desert while everybody else can see what you're doing. Noah not only believed in God's promise, but he also acted upon it.

People of faith see the One who is invisible, not as a hallucination but as a revelation of the Spirit of the living God. Romans 12:3 says that God has given every person a measure of faith. We all have the capacity to experience and embrace the reality of God as our Creator. We all express this natural faith every day. – When we flip a light switch or trust a surgeon to do an operation. But natural faith doesn't always lead us to perceive God. That requires acting upon the measure of spiritual faith God gives us at birth.

We develop both natural and spiritual faith through experience. Natural faith is developed through natural experiences. The nature of spiritual faith is that it's developed through supernatural experiences. Spiritual faith is a gift of God.

I. The Testimony of Faith

Then the writer moves on to the testimony of faith. Hebrews 11:2 says, "For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony." (Hebrews 11:2 NKJV)

By what? – "the testimony of faith!" By faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "AND WAS NOT FOUND, BECAUSE GOD HAD TAKEN HIM"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Hebrews 11:4-5 NKJV)

"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." (Hebrews 11:7-11 NKJV)

But look at verse 6, "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV)

The way you live your life is your testimony! Do you put your faith in the Creator or in the creation? Do you live by spiritual faith in Jesus Christ or by natural faith in this world.

Our world now worships the creation rather than the Creator. And the most prominent leader of this movement is a created being himself – Satan. Satan wants God's creation to worship him. There is only one rational answer to our world's dilemma, and that is God. The God who made the universe.

From the time of Adam to this very moment, people of faith have believed in God and testified by how they lived their lives that their faith was real. Life for them held the conviction of a future reality that they knew, by faith, was genuine.

Is your life a testimony of faith in Christ?

II. The Vision of Faith

Finally, let's look at the vision of faith. Verse 3 says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." (Hebrews 11:3 NKJV)

Belief that God created the visible world and the universe and the ages is a conviction of faith, not sight. No one can say, "I was there when it happened, and I

saw how it all started." No one can say that because no one was there. The only thing we know about the creation of the universe is what we know by faith. Through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the Word of God.

The word for worlds there is *aiōn*, ages. It has to do with creating the universe and all of the ages of administration within the universe. God spoke, and all of matter came into existence. The Pentateuch began with Genesis and the description of how it all began. The Jewish people of faith believed (and still do) that God made the world.

You cannot operate on the faith of someone else. Each of us must personally receive Jesus Christ by faith. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12 NKJV)

And Jesus said in John 12:48, " He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48 NKJV)

Each of us must come to know personally and believe the principles and promises of the Word if we want to experience God's work in our lives. Biblical faith is not blind faith. God has provided abundant evidence in creation for the fact of His being. Psalm 19 says, "The heavens declare God's glory, and the sky displays his handiwork."

Romans 1:20 says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." (Romans 1:20-25 NKJV)

People are really without excuse when it comes to knowing and believing in God. Faith gives you the vision to see it!

The resurrection is one of the most documentable truths of history. But faith gives you the vision to see it. Acts 17:31 tells us that God "has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31 NKJV)

Biblical faith does not operate out of a mindless vacuum. It is related to what we know and think.

Conclusion

Faith gives you the vision to see the unseen. People of Faith are not afraid to take the risk and face the challenges God sets before them because their faith is practical and personal. Romans 10: 17 says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Romans 8: 16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God's children." Faith comprehends what the mind cannot. Faith is the language of God.

1 Corinthians 2: 9 says, "However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"— the things God has prepared for those who love him— these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."

[\(1 Corinthians 2: 9-10 NIV\)](#)

Faith gives us the vision to see it! And the just shall live by what? Faith!