

So now we come to the 11th chapter of Hebrews! What a lighthearted and whimsical book!

Actually, after having finished up our last series on the Gospel of John, where we left Jesus and the disciples on the shore of the beautiful sea of Galilee, eating fresh fish cooked over charcoal fire.

Now probably some of you feel like you're wearing hip waders, on a muggy hot Oklahoma day, trudging through a swamp, seeking to find nourishment of some sort, crawdads, tadpoles, fish eggs?

Well, I have good news for you today!

Hebrews 11 is a huge turning point in this amazing, logical argument called the book of Hebrews.

In the first 10 chapters, the writer works so hard to explain and prove his point, his argument, that Jesus is better.

He takes *every single little aspect* of the Jewish religion and explains how Jesus is has fulfilled not only all the aspects of the rituals and fixtures of Judaism, like the priesthood, far beyond our wildest imaginations.

He is very concise, deliberate, comprehensive, and some would say exhaustive.

Just because the book of Hebrews is a virtual masterpiece of logic and the Greek language, doesn't mean we can't admit to each other (and ourselves) that it gets tedious or rather deep, as he pounds home his points. (Over and over agin)

So now, we can take a deep breath, and exhale, relax and enjoy some more lighthearted scripture.

We've been studying the old way of the Jews, and how Jesus is better, so now, how do we apply this. How do we live this new faith as found in Jesus? In Hebrews last week, 10:38, he quoted an OT verse, from Hab. 4:9, "The just shall live by faith". And now in chapter 11 he shows how that, in the largest way, in the most accurate way, faith did apply to the OT saints, men and women of faith. They LIVED by faith. Habakkuk even said so! An OT book!

So, is there a difference between then and now? Now the main difference I can see between the Old Testament and the New Testament faith, is that Jesus said, that after He went back to be with the Father He would send the Holy Spirit to be with us and live in us. That was not so with the Old Testament men of faith. And that is comforting as Christians.

When we are saved, as it says in 2 Corinthian's 5:17 "therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold all things have become new."

Notice it says "if anyone is in Christ".

We've all heard the phrase or words "once saved always saved".

Well, a better, more biblically accurate way of stating that would be "IF Saved, always saved", as it says in 2Corinthians 5:17. IF anyone is in Christ you are a new creation. The old is gone, and the new is here. The Holy Spirit is yours. Born again! You can't be unborn. The Holy Spirit is in you. The Holy Spirit does and will change you. Your heart will love God--eternally. Wow, what a deal!

That's if and only if, you're a believer. It is nice we have such absolute statements.

So, here's a big consideration: and sad but true, the Old Testament men and women of faith did not have this new birth, this new creation, the Holy Spirit living inside them,

which nowadays make us a totally new creation. It actually makes me wonder how they did it. How did they stand strong?

So Hebrews 11 is known as the Hall of Faith, with a list of men and women who had faith.

So what I'd like to ask before we begin, how many of you , you don't have to raise your hands, but how many of you have been taught that Hebrews 11 verse one is a definition of faith?

"faith is the assurance of things hoped for, conviction of things not seen".

I was taught that that was THE definition of faith. I remember thinking, that's no good, how can I do anything with that! It doesn't make sense!

Then years later I was taught that actually verse six is a better definition of faith.

Verse one is more of a *description of faith*, what it does and its results. Kind of like, "a car is red and it takes you places". That doesn't define "car" but only tells *about* it.

So just what is faith? verse 6 has the much clearer, more functional, more usable and applicable definition of faith. Let's skip down and look at verse 6:

6And 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 seek Him.

So, in order to please God, or be pleasing to God, we must have faith, which means we must **believe two** things. **First**, that God is and **second**, that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Believe-- not to believe like the Devils, but you must take God at his word. He is who He says He is! He will do what He says He will do. He's rebuilding you the way He said He would and He has revealed himself through Jesus, as His delight, His plan for the entire world. And if we believe Him like He says we should, then He will reward us by coming into us and changing us, giving us eternal life. So that's a much better definition of faith, verse six.

I love the way Spurgeon speaks of this:

"First, then, the apostle teaches us here, by implication, that God is pleased with those that have faith. The negative is often the plainest way of suggesting the positive. If we are so carefully warned that without faith it is impossible to please God, we infer that with faith it is possible to please God. If you believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. If you are willing to believe all that He teaches you because He teaches it, and are really a believer in Himself and in all that He is pleased to reveal, then are you pleasing to Him. He that believes in God believes in all the words that God speaks and he surrenders himself to all that God does. And such a man must be pleasing to God."

So now, finally we are going to actually just read through Hebrews 11.

Here we find dozens of examples of men and women of faith.

It tells what they did to show their faith. Without faith they wouldn't have done what they did.

So we're going to let's walk through Hebrews 11 and just will discuss together what did each one of them do to show that they had faith.

Tell me, we'll discuss this together, let's see if it always fits in this definition-- that they believe that God was, and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

One thing to always keep in mind: the listeners or readers of Hebrews, the intended audience, were all Jews and they knew these biblical characters well. They knew that

they were not perfect. They knew they had huge flaws, yet they were pleasing in God's eyes because of their faith. So it's faith that matters! Nothing else.

1Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. **2**For by it the men of old gained approval.

3By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

4By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

5By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

6And 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 seek Him.

7By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

8By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; **10**for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

11By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. **12**Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.

13All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. **14**For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. **15**And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. **16**But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

17By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; **18**it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." **19**He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

20By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.

21By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

23By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

24By faith **Moses**, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, **25**choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, **26**considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. **27**By faith **he** left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. **28**By faith **he** kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

29By faith **they** passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

30By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

31By faith **Rahab** the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

32And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of **Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets**, **33**who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, **34**quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. **35****Women** received *back* their dead by resurrection;

and **others** were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; **36**and **others** experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. **37**They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated **38**(*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

39And all these, **having gained approval through their faith**, did not receive what was promised, **40**because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

What???? I've always had trouble with this verse! To understand vs. 40, reverse the negatives to get a "contrapositive" statement: You get : (with us, in the same way, they were made perfect—i.e. **they don't receive God's approval through a different mode or method than we do**)!!!! **Or to be perfectly clear- They were saved in the same way as we are, by faith!!!**

Slam dunk! Undeniable proof! Devastatingly insightful to say the least! Brilliantly logical demonstration! Wonderful sum-up of this entire book!

So were these people perfect? LOL!! But they believed in God. God as He chose to reveal Himself!

Are we perfect? Nope! Of course not. If we pretended to be perfect, how could we be of any help or encouragement to others, Christians or non-Christians?

Quote to remember: You aren't worth a dime without your problems.

God uses everything in our lives for His glory.

We don't have to be wise, artistic, strong, famous, empire builders, brilliant or anything else to please God.

When we come to God we merely have to believe that He is who he says He is, He's trustworthy.

And believe that, as God has promised us, Jesus has paid the price so that God has forgiven our sins, *if and when* we believe in Him.