

Living “By Faith”

Hebrews 11

Introduction

1. Many people talk about having faith.
2. Most religious people know that faith is essential for salvation (Heb. 11:6).
3. Those who know the scriptures know that faith must be combined with works in order to result in salvation (James 2:22-26).
4. In this lesson we are going to look at the examples of working faith proved in Hebrews chapter 11.
5. Through these examples God shows us how we can receive our salvation “by faith.”

Discussion

I. So Great a Cloud of Witnesses (Heb. 12:1)

A. What great cloud of witnesses?

1. In the context, the cloud of witnesses described in chapter 11.
2. These are all witnesses throughout history.
3. They are God’s faithful people who stand as examples, and teachers, and as encouragement for us today.

B. Of what do they bear witness?

1. They are witnesses of the kind of faith God’s servants must have.
2. We will notice first that Jesus endure the cross—being the greatest example of one who looked to the joy ahead of the suffering and allowed that to carry Him through (12:2).
3. But in chapter 11 we have a great cloud of witnesses who have shown us that even mere men (as opposed to the Son of God) can live on this earth by faith in the living God. How did they do it?
4. In Heb. 11:13: *“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.”*

C. “Died in faith” how?

1. Not having received the promises: They were given promises by God just as we are today. But those promises were not fulfilled in their lifetimes. Rather, they died being comforted in knowing that God would fulfill His promises in His own time and eventually raise them up from the dead.
2. But having seen them afar off were assured of them: They knew that God would not fulfill those promises in their lifetimes, but they looked forward to them nevertheless. They saw the promises of God and acknowledged their reality.
3. Embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth: They understood eternal spiritual nature of those promises. They understood that those promises were not for those who made their homes on this earth. Therefore

they chose to ease off their care for the things of this life that they may attain the promises of the heavenly life

D. Let us now see how they accomplished these things by examining Heb. 11.

II. By Faith

A. By faith Able offered a more excellent sacrifice (vs. 3).

1. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).
2. Able heeded the word of God where Cain did not.
3. That means that Able received the word of God, acknowledged the truth of it, held to its pattern, and looked forward to its promises.

B. By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death (vs. 5).

1. He pleased God.
2. He pleased God because he believed in God.
3. He pleased God because he trusted in the rewards of God.
4. He pleased God because he diligently sought after the God and the rewards that He had promised.

C. By faith Noah moved with Godly fear (vs. 7).

1. He believed in the word of God which said the flood was coming.
2. He believed in the salvation of the Lord.
3. He believed in the power of God's word to save him and his family if he was obedient to it.

D. By faith Abraham obeyed (vs. 8).

1. He left home and family to go where God told him.
2. He had faith that He was going to receive an inheritance according to the promises of God.
3. He had such faith in God that he was willing to wander, dwelling in tents as a sojourner, not calling any place on earth home because he trusted in a city that God would give him.

E. By faith Sarah was willing to keep having children even though her body was past the point of childbearing and thus had a child according to the promise of God (vs. 11).

F. By faith Abraham offered up the son that God had promised him (vs. 17).

1. Isaac was his only son by Sarah, but he did not withhold him.
2. He was the son through whom God promised to make a great nation, but Abraham did not question in unbelief.
3. Abraham had total confidence that whatever God wanted him to do, God would in the end fulfill all of His promises—some how, some way.
4. Therefore Abraham, by faith, did not withhold anything from the service of God.

G. By faith many others made such sacrifices that men today would not dream of (vs. 20ff).

1. Vs. 20-22, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph trusted in the promises of God and looked forward to those blessings when they blessed their sons.
2. Vs. 23-29: By faith Moses was willing to give up a princely life to dwell with slaves because he knew they were God's people. He saw that the reproach of men for the service of God was far greater than the luxuries of Egypt.
3. Vs. 30: By faith Joshua and Israel followed the instructions of God and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.
4. Vs. 32: By faith all of God's servants made great sacrifices for the service of God and are therefore known as great men because they served the Lord.
 - a. These men were not considered great because they did things their own way.
 - b. They were not great because of their own strength.
 - c. They were great because they set aside human wisdom and worldly values and made a choice to serve God regardless of the sacrifices. God has shown through their lives that He does not leave His faithful servants empty handed.
5. Vs. 35: The next time we think we are making a great sacrifice to serve our Lord then we should read vs. 35. When the Hebrew Christians were tempted to turn back from serving God because of hardship the Hebrew writer, with these men in minds simply said in 12:3-4, "*You have not resisted to bloodshed.*"

III. Lay Aside Every Weight (12:1)

- A. Chapter 12 draws the examples of all these great men and women and says, "What about you?"
 1. This is the great cloud of witnesses.
 2. They are witnesses of the meaning of true faith in God.
 3. Heb. 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him," and this is the kind of faith he was talking about.
 4. As it says that we must "believe that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him," it is talking about men like Abraham, Moses, and all the others who made great sacrifices in order to seek God because they did not care about this present life; rather, they were looking ahead to the future spiritual life promised by God.
 5. They are witnesses of how men ought to live their lives in the service of God who have this same faith.
 6. We today, brethren, not only have those promises, but through Jesus Christ, we have access to even greater promises than they (11:39-40).
- B. Therefore, we are told in 12:1 to "*lay aside every weight.*"
 1. Our weight is that which is holding us down, keeping us from serving God the way these people did.
 2. Our weights can include anything from evil companions, to immodest clothing; from outbursts of anger to pride, doubt, and fear.
 3. They are the things that we have difficulty letting go at times when our faithfulness is being tested.
 4. We are perfectly capable of serving God like Noah, who stood out in a world of evil and wickedness, or like Elijah who stood against 450 prophets of Baal.

5. But the only way we can serve God like these men is if we are willing to serve God **BY FAITH**. Faith in His promises, faith in His wisdom and faith in His power.
6. “*Trust in the Lord with all your hearts, and lean not on your own understanding*” (Prov. 3:5). Human wisdom would tell us that offering our child to God was foolish—but Abraham had such faith in the power of God that he knew God would raise his son from the dead.
7. Now, God is asking us to take His and to allow Him to lead us in His way—like Jesus asking people to come out onto the water. Are you willing to take that step?

Conclusion

1. We have seen to many people who gave their lives because they trusted in God, and He did not let them down. Now it is your turn to show your faith.
2. The point we need to take the heart from Heb. 11-12 is that, while men like Moses and Abraham were great men, they also show a faith that must be common among God’s people.
3. We today have the ability to be like Abraham, like Moses, like David and Elijah.
4. Just as they had faith to serve God, we can have faith as well.
5. The challenge, however, is in laying aside our own weights: If we find it challenging to be faithful to God as these men were it is because of our love for the things of this life and our unwillingness to let go.
6. Are you willing to seek God? Are you willing to lay aside your weights and serve God with your life? God is waiting for you. Will you come?

By David Phillips

Avondale church of Christ
1606 Glen Willow Rd., P.O. Box 421, Avondale, PA 19311
(610) 268-2088, gospelstudies@verizon.net
www.avondalechristians.com