

Hebrews 11 - Faith's Hall of Fame

[INTRODUCTION: After closing with a plea and admonition to continued faithfulness, our author turns his attention to the matter of faith itself and the great examples of faithfulness among those who had not been the recipients of God's great promises.]

1. "Now faith is the _____ of things hoped for, the _____ of things not _____."

[Contrary to the thinking and expressions of infidels, biblical faith is not some kind of "leap in the dark." Instead, the author points to faith as being both substantive and evidentiary.

"Substance" is from a word found only 5 times in the New Testament and is normally translated "confidence" (cf Heb 3:14, 2 Cor 9:4, 11:17). The author used this same word to describe Jesus as possessing the very substance of God in Hebrews 1:3, wherein the word is translated "person."

The word for "evidence" is more common in its New Testament usage, and in its noun form (as it appears here) means to provide proof. It appears as "tell him his fault" in Matthew 18:15 and "reproof" in 2 Timothy 3:16. The word contains an element or implication of absolute certainty of proof or correctness.

In keeping with this thought, we should remember that God never calls on us to act wherein we do not have evidence to do so, even if we do not understand why we are pursuing a course of action or understand how God is going to work things out for His glory and our good. For example:

When God called Moses to go back to Egypt to confront the king and comfort the people, God gave him signs to perform to validate his testimony. Moses' faith had already been confirmed in the incident with the burning bush (cf Ex 3-4). Also, when Elijah called upon Israel to forsake Baal and return to God, he gave the people sufficient evidence to believe his message (cf 1 Kings 18).

So it is with men today. We should not call on anyone to take any course of action for which we cannot give them evidence (i.e., authority) to confirm our message.]

2. "For by it the _____ obtained a good _____."

["It" refers back to "faith" in verse 1. "The elders" is not here a reference to elders as in those in the New Testament church, but rather the ancestors or forefathers of the audience. The "good testimony" is the favorable testimony given on behalf of these faithful forerunners. This is evident from the line of persuasion beginning in verse 4 and continuing to the opening lines of chapter 12.

Finally, it should be noted that the favorable testimony was not that of men, but of God, which is seen in verses 4 and 5 in the accounts of Abel and Enoch.]

3. “By _____ we _____ that the worlds were framed by the _____ of _____, so that the things which are _____ were not made of things which do _____.”

[Consider for a moment the magnificence and magnitude of this statement. First, it affirms the biblical record of Creation, “that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” This is the kind of faith that only comes from hearing the word of God (Rom 10:17). Aside from Scripture, there is no way to know how the universe was created. Day One aside, every day of the Creation account begins with, “Then God said” (cf Gen 1:6, 9, 14, 20, 24). Second, it affirms the absolute truth that the universe and all things in it had to be created out of nothing. It is a scientific fact, not to mention good ol’ common sense, that something (matter) cannot come from nothing.

Bringing these two points together, the only reasonable explanation for the existence of anything, much less all things, is the Bible account of Creation. The atheist has no plausible explanation for the origin of the universe. Aside from “the Big Bang,” there are other mythological explanations. Here is one from Greek mythology:

“In the beginning there was an empty darkness. The only thing in this void was Nyx, a bird with black wings. With the wind she laid a golden egg and for ages she sat upon this egg. Finally life began to stir in the egg and out of it rose Eros, the god of love. One half of the shell rose into the air and became the sky and the other became the Earth. Eros named the sky Uranus and the Earth he named Gaia.” (<http://www.cs.williams.edu>)

While history records much ignorance about the world and science in the days of the Old and New Testaments, this singular statement shows the integrity of the biblical record in keeping with both science and philosophy.]

4. “By _____ Abel offered 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 _____ still _____.”

[This verse has long been a “go to” text on the matter of authority in worship, and for good reason. In Genesis 4, there is not a single syllable with regard to Cain’s intent or his heart, only the insufficiency of his offering. The difference between his offering and that of Abel is seen in the word “also” in Genesis 4:4. Abel brought an offering of fruit AND of the firstborn of the flock. It was in this latter offering wherein Cain fell short.

From the present text, we see the difference in how these offerings were distinguished. God testified of Abel’s gifts (plural). This corresponds with the literal meaning of the text translated “more excellent” or “more acceptable” (ESV). The quality of what Cain offered was not in question, but rather the quantity.

Most brethren join Abel's "faith" in this verse to that of Romans 10:17, which I believe is complimentary to the faith of Hebrews 10:38 and 11:3. The faith under consideration in Hebrews 11:4 is the same as that by which we are justified and by which we know the worlds were framed by the word of God, namely the inspired Scriptures. Note also in the Genesis text that God told Cain that, though now unaccepted, he could be accepted "if you do well" (Gen 4:7). How does one know how to do well? "The statutes of Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes... Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward" (Ps 19:8, 11).

Finally, let us not forget Abel's lasting legacy of faithfulness as expressed in His obedience to God's word. He is the first in what will be a litany of great Bible characters in this chapter. Consider how great Abel's faith was. His parents lack of faith caused their downfall and rejection by God. Never again in the pages of holy writ would either be mentioned in a favorable way. He had no favorable parental example, neither was his older brother of any help. Abel truly stood alone in the world as a man who loved God and was willing to be alone in his service to God.]

5. "By faith Enoch was _____ 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 _____ God."

[Enoch is one of only two men who never tasted death, being taken directly to heaven by God Himself; the other being Elijah (cf 2 Kings 2:1,11). When I consider the paucity of the Bible record regarding Enoch, especially as opposed to Elijah, I cannot help but think of the Bible as being given by God. I cannot imagine so little being recorded for posterity for such an obviously great man.]

6. "But without _____ it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He _____, and that He is a _____ of those who _____ seek Him."

[Faithful service to God has always necessitated faith. The acceptable service of the Patriarchs is noted in this first section, followed by the faithful service of Moses and those who lived under the Law. Chapter 12 will begin with the admonition for Christians to follow in the same path as these great heroes of faith with a view to the faith of Christ (Heb 12:1-3).]

7. "By faith Noah, being _____ warned of things not yet _____, moved with _____, _____ and ark to the saving of his household, by which he _____ the _____ and became an _____ of the _____ which is according to faith."

[This verse is so rich! First, we see the confirmation of Noah's faith in God concerning "things not yet seen," namely floods (cf Gen 2:5). God did not say anything about this rain until after Noah had built the ark (cf Gen 7:4). God had only mentioned flood waters prior to this (cf Gen 6:17). Note also the connection between God's word and man's obedience as a requisite of biblical faith. Noah's faith was demonstrated by his obedience, and he was not saved until after he obeyed.]

8. Appropriation of Grace: Let's take a moment to make the connection between Grace, Law, Faith, Works and Reward. Genesis 6:8 says "Noah found _____ in the eyes of the Lord."
- Was Noah saved from the flood at this point? _____
 - How was God's grace manifested to Noah? _____
 - Was Noah required to do something in response to God's grace? _____
 - How was Noah's faith revealed (Gen 6:22, Heb 11:7)? _____
 - Did Noah's works negate God's grace? _____

[This same blueprint can be seen in the healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5) and will be noted in the conquest of Jericho (v 30, Joshua 6). It is also the same way that God uses the plan of salvation to appropriate His grace in saving men today: 1) God's grace is manifest in His law (Titus 2:11-12); 2) Man, by faith, obeys (works) God's commands (Law); whereby, 3) Man is rewarded with a blessing that cannot possibly be said to have been earned or merited (Eph 2:8-10).

Noah was saved by grace when he built an ark in keeping with God's command (Gen 6-8). The Israelites conquered Jericho when they marched around the city in keeping with God's commands (Josh 6). Naaman was healed of leprosy when he dipped in the Jordan River in keeping with God's command (2 Kings 5). Men are saved by grace today when they believed the gospel and are baptized in keeping with God's commands (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5-7).]

9. "By faith Abraham _____ when he was _____ to _____ to the place which he would receive as an _____. And he went out, not _____ where he was going."

Hebrews 11:8-10 is a picture of the Christian's sojourn on earth. Can you find the parallels?

Consider the text and list all the parallels you can find.

<u>Abraham</u>	<u>The Christian</u>
a. _____	_____
b. _____	_____
c. _____	_____
d. _____	_____
e. _____	_____
f. _____	_____
g. _____	_____

10. “By faith Sarah herself also received _____ to _____ seed, and she bore a child when she was _____ the _____, because she judged him _____ who _____.”

[This commendation of Sarah’s faith is interesting in light of the fact there isn’t a single syllable in the Old Testament to confirm it. The sacred record only records her as doubting, laughing within herself and then denying the same (cf Gen 18:11-14). As an aside, we often forget that Abraham laughed first (Gen 17:17). However, a lack of Old Testament corroboration is not an argument against the testimony of the New (no more than a lack of corroboration in the gospels negates Paul’s statement attributed to Jesus in Acts 20:35).]

11. “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, _____ up _____, and he who had received the promises offered up his _____... concluding that God was able to _____ him up, even from the _____, from which he also received him in a _____ sense.”

[Abraham’s faith in God was not only that God had the power to raise the dead, but that He would in fact raise Isaac from the dead after Abraham killed him.]

What phrase or line from Genesis 22:5 indicates Abraham’s faith in God to raise Isaac from the dead? _____

12. Moses was said to have done three things by faith. What are they?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

13. What two ways is sin described in Hebrews 11:25? _____

[We do people, and young people in particular, a terrible disservice if we do not accurately present the nature of sin. This text tells us that sin is pleasurable; if it were not, there would be no temptation to commit it. It also tells us that sin’s pleasure is temporary. Sin cannot provide any sense of permanent satisfaction. Whether it be in the matter of sexual sins, drugs, etc., sin can never satisfy. It always leaves one empty.

On the other hand, this text teaches us that suffering for the cause of Christ is infinitely more to be desired than great riches, for in this there is great reward (cf Psalm 19:8-11).

14. In verses 26-27, what two phrases show us Moses' "eyes of faith?"

a. _____

b. _____

[Consider for a moment the faith of Moses. He forsook Egypt with all its glory based upon his faith in God. There wasn't a single page of the Bible written at that time. No divine call or sign. Just a simple yet profound faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of his people. Moreover, verse 26 notes that Moses had faith in the coming Messiah and the promises associated therewith. Thus, he was willing to forsake all his tangible riches for those which could not be seen.]

15. "By faith he kept the _____ and the _____ of _____, lest he who destroyed the _____ should touch them."

[Here is an account of faith based on past experience. Moses and Israel had the full assurance of faith following the plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians, and especially those wherein God made a distinction between Egypt and Israel beginning with the fourth plague (flies) in Exodus 8:20.]

16. "By faith the walls of Jericho _____ they were _____ for _____ days."

[Note the walls "fell down" just as recorded in Joshua 6:20 wherein the wall was said to "fall down flat." There was no assault upon the wall, no sabotage from within the city, no earthquake or flood. Nothing but a seven day excursion of faithful obedience to God.

This is another case to illustrate Grace, Law, Faith, Works and Reward. God's grace is seen in Joshua 6:2, "I have given Jericho into your hand." God spoke of it as an accomplished fact, even though it was not yet a reality. God's law is seen in the commands to march around the city. Israel's faith is seen in their works of obedience, and God's reward is evident in the manifestation of the promise following Israel's obedience. Israel's works appropriated God's grace; they did not negate it. God did not reward Israel until after they obeyed God's law. Grace and works are not necessarily antithetical to one another, provided the works are those required by God and the doer of those works understands the inability of work to merit Divine reward. See Luke 17:7-10.]

17. "By faith the _____ Rahab did not perish with those who _____, when she had received the spies with peace."

[Note how Rahab is contrasted with those in Jericho "who did not believe." Read of her faith in Joshua 2:9-11. Rahab was no disgruntled citizen looking to sell out her people or simply save her own skin. Note the detail in her recollection of the Red Sea crossing and the destruction of Sihon and Og (cf Num 21:21-35). Everyone in the city knew these things, yet they did not repent.

Consider also that forty years had passed since Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry land. Thus, there must have been witnesses to this event, as the word had obviously spread into Canaan and remained in the minds of the inhabitants there. Also, the single Greek word here translated “did not believe” (apeitheo S# 544) is rendered “disobedient” in the ESV (cf John 3:36).

Here is another odd thought that occurred to me for the first time... According to Joshua 2:15, Rahab’s house was located in or on the city wall. Her house had a window that opened to the outside of the wall, which window was used to let down the spies. It was also in this window that the scarlet cloth was hung to identify her and save her household during the assault on the city. It just occurred to me that the portion of the wall wherein her house was built did not fall, as she and her family and good were protected therein. This would have been a secondary sign to God’s approval and protection upon this woman and her house.]

18. Hebrews 11:33-35 contains a litany of blessings received by faith. Look at the list and do your best to remember/identify someone or some event fitting the following descriptions. You may include anyone listed in verse 32.
- a. Subdued kingdoms _____
 - b. Obtained promises _____
 - c. Stopped the mouths of lions _____
 - d. Quenched the violence of fire _____
 - e. Escaped the edge of the sword _____
 - f. Out of weakness were made strong _____
 - g. Received their dead raised to live again _____
19. Hebrews 11:35-37 contains a list of trials, some of which are horrifying and others unspeakable, that some endured “through faith.” As with the previous list, do your best to remember or identify someone or some event fitting each description listed below.
- a. Tortured _____
 - b. Mocking and scourging _____
 - c. Chains and imprisonment _____
 - d. Stoned _____
 - e. Slain with the sword _____
 - f. Destitute wanderers _____

[The above list does not reflect the entirety of the text because some of these horrors are not detailed in the pages of Holy Writ. While we do not have an example of each, we can know with certainty that each indeed occurred. Moreover, it is probable that the epistle's recipients were aware of these through the oral or other written traditions (cf Acts 20:35).

"That they might obtain a better resurrection" is generally believed to be a comparison to the "resurrection" of deliverance from death by the hands of man versus the resurrection of the faithful through the word of God. It brings to mind the account of Polycarp's death in AD 155. Threatened with death by wild beasts or fire, he was urged, "Reproach Christ, and I will set you free." Polycarp replied, "Eighty and six years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and Savior?" And with that the flames were lit and he was martyred.]

20. Of these, the author said the _____ was not _____."

[These were rejected, driven from the face of the earth, as unworthy to inhabit it, when in fact, the world was not worthy for such to dwell among them. Remember! The Lord does not see as man sees, for the Lord looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). "As for the saints who are on the earth, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight" (Psalm 16:3).]

21. All of these had obtained a good _____ through _____, yet did not receive the _____.

[What was said of the Patriarchs in verse 13 is now applied to all the faithful from Moses forward.

One thing that must be remembered is that God did not shortchange these great human pillars of faith. He did not fail to deliver on His promises made to them (cf Josh 21:45). Rather, the text should be understood in the sense that these all lived and died in faith in view of the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to redeem all men to Himself through the blood of Jesus Christ.]

22. "God having provided something _____ for us, that they should not be made _____ apart from us."

[This "something better" is generally viewed as the fulfillment of the covenant promised in Jesus Christ. However, the final phrase is unusual and the subject of several differing views. One thing is certain, it isn't "us" who were the necessary or lacking component for the perfection of the Old Testament faithful, but rather the promise received by us in the Christian/Gospel Age.]