

Faith and the Christian Fight (Part 1)

Hebrews 11 and Faith

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I am going to be continuing the series of sermons I gave up until three weeks ago. In this case the metaphors involving warfare abound in the Bible. In the New Testament, writers in particular frequently draw upon some form of them to illustrate Christian life. These metaphors remove any doubt that living a Christian life will not be like a Sunday walk in the park.

The mortal dangers of war are not much emphasized—there are some indications of them—but instead the focus is on the stresses of struggle, depravation, and sacrifice. These arrive, in many cases, simply because the Christian cannot live a normal life; that is, a lifestyle similar to what everybody around him is living, and this creates stresses.

Any soldier participating in warfare for the benefit of his nation, and most especially his loved ones, must have within him some measure of determination driven by his belief that his cause in this war is just—the more of that type of conviction, the better.

Faith very much enters the picture of a Christian's fight with the spiritual forces that are arrayed against us. In fact, since one cannot literally see God, but instead *can* spiritually see and understand what He has caused to be written in the instructions regarding faith, we find that faith is involved in every aspect of Christian life. The faith is absolutely essential to the Christian's warfare. Salvation is by *grace through* faith.

Now to love as God loves is indeed the spiritual goal of Christian life, but reaching that awesome peak must have some foundation supporting it, and that foundation for the disciple of Christ is faith.

Hebrews 11 is one of the chapters of the Bible that is of a classic status, and though it may not be as high in public popularity as Psalm 23 or I Corinthians 13, its importance to conversion must surely be the equal of those two.

Psalm 23 has a warm, comforting appeal to it that gives one assurance that God is with us, and regardless of circumstances, He will provide. Thus it too, in its own intimate way, is a strong expression of faith touching many areas of the Christian's fight.

I Corinthians 13 provides us with clear pictures as to how Godly love acts and reacts, and in so doing sets very high standards for us to achieve in emulating God in practical ways.

I want you to turn to Hebrews 12:1-4. This is where we are going to begin.

Hebrews 12:1-4 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our

faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

These statements draw one's attention to practical applications of the vivid illustrations of chapter 11. Notice the word "Wherefore." All that preceded that in chapter 11 is drawn to what we see at the beginning of chapter 12. Thus can we see that what Hebrews 11 is to faith is what I Corinthians 13 is to love, and what Psalm 23 is to bolstering encouragement.

Hebrews 11 shows how great men and women of the past used their faith in God to achieve great things in their witness for Him, and in so doing they have left behind standards and examples as instructions for our spiritual well-being as they fought through *their* daily responsibilities. Hebrews 11 is a chapter that gives direction in broad strokes of the circumstances in which they made practical use of their faith in God and in His way.

In Hebrews 11:1 it says that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Understanding this verse—especially "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"—is essential to deriving the most from this chapter. That is a very good practical definition of faith, but it is not the *only* one, because the Bible uses faith in several ways. As a matter of fact, this is really not so much a definition of what faith *is*, as it is a definition of what faith *does*.

Now faith, as a term, does not have only one aspect to it, so we must be thinking as we read, or we may get the wrong picture rather than the one God intends within a given context.

I want you to turn with me to Galatians 1:23.

Galatians 1:23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preaches the faith which once he destroyed.

In context with the word "preaching," faith as used here in religious parlance means, or indicates, a confession. In the world of religion "confession" is a creed—a body of religious beliefs, a statement of the principles of one's way of life. It is often used in this manner in the New Testament, and I will show you one that is quite clear in the book of Jude. The word "faith" is used the same way as it is in Galatians 1:23, but I think that this one is even clearer.

Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

This is similar to Galatians 1:23, but I feel Jude 3 is clearer. Jude uses faith as a body of beliefs that we are exhorted to steadfastly cling to and apply to one's challenges. Jude concedes

Christian faith as having definite unchanging and *unchangeable* principles upon which it is based. Essentially Jude is saying here, "*Hey folks! Nothing has changed. Let's get back to what we had in the beginning, because the faith is the body of beliefs that was given to us by and through Jesus Christ which we are to believe and apply in our lives*"

Now we are going to turn to one that is a little bit different use of the term faith. Turn to John 20: 31. In my *King James Version* the word "faith" does not appear in verse 31, but the word "believe" and "believing" does. Same difference.

John 20:31 But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name.

Here in this context Jesus Christ is faith's object. In other words, the faith is aimed at Christ. "Believing" indicates personal trust or confidence in Him as a person. We are going to put a little twist on this by going to the book of Romans.

Romans 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.

In this case we see "faith" in a general *legal* context, and it indicates a level of personal confidence or trust in what Christ *did*; that is, a means of justification, and therefore access to God. So faith is seen as confidence in a specific work or accomplishment of Jesus Christ that enables us to have a relationship with God.

Now, we are going to Romans 10:17 and there see a very important piece of knowledge regarding faith. This is a very well-known scripture.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

What this verse tells us is how faith in God, how faith in Jesus Christ, how faith in what Christ did, becomes a part of our thinking. It comes through hearing the word of God. This concept is very important because we can hear *lots* of things. We can hear about automobiles, about cakes, about soup, about baseball teams, about anything in which we have confidence, but it is not about hearing about Christ; therefore He and what He did is not the object of that confidence, or that faith, or that trust; but in regards to salvation, *the* faith of God—the faith of Jesus Christ, the faith that becomes a means of saving—comes to us by hearing the word of God, or hearing the word of Jesus Christ and His message. So faith becomes an element of one's thinking by hearing words that concern the *object* of faith—Jesus Christ and His message, the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Here is something that is super important. Faith comes about because we hear the gospel, but we must understand that this is modified in other places in the Bible, most especially and clearly in Ephesians 2: 8-10, but especially verse 8 where it says "For by grace are you saved through

faith," and "it is the gift of God."

Let us just feed that information back into Romans 10: 7. Faith is a gift of God. It does not come about in us because of what we do in response to hearing the message. It comes about solely only because of what *God* does to our mind. It is a gift. Now what *we* do with what He gives is our response, and our response is our works.

Never forget that faith is the gift of God, and God does what He does in giving the gift when we come in contact with the message—the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Never forget that faith does not come because we respond. Faith comes because of what *God* does (and did), and *then* we respond. Is that clear? That is why salvation is a gift. It is through faith, and the faith is a gift of God. It is what He does when we hear the gospel. It is not just because we heard the gospel, and I will prove this to you more as we go along here. Salvation is God's gift.

It is interesting that Paul emphasizes "hearing" rather than merely "reading." I want you to recall what Jesus said in John 6: 63. This occurred at a time whenever He lost apparently a great number of disciples because they did not like what they were hearing from Him. He said:

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

What God does, combined with the hearing of the gospel, is what puts us on the track for salvation and the providing of life by God. Now "hearing," or more correctly "*listening*," makes it even more specific. It is probably the most consistent and frequent exhortation Jesus made throughout His entire ministry. If we do not provide thoughtful listening, we will not have faith in the right object, and we will not produce the correct works. Regardless of the context in which "faith" appears, there is always a mixture of the elements of believing, knowing, understanding, trusting, and sometimes even a bold conviction locked together and pointed toward a specific object. And almost always, within the Bible, that object is God, or Jesus Christ, or the Word of God, or any number of messengers sent by God, whether angel, prophet, or minister.

Do you remember what Jesus told the disciples there in John 10 when He sent them out? He said, "If somebody will not listen to you, just leave." They are not going to listen. He said, "Shake the dust off your feet, and go on." And then He added, "It is going to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than it will be for them." And then the last thing listed in that chapter is, "He that receives you, receives me, and he who receives Me receives the Father." You see, there is an unbroken chain up and down that leads directly to the Father—the ultimate object of *the* faith that saves: God the Father, God the Son, and their Word.

I want you to go back to the book of Hebrews again, this time to chapter 10. The subject of faith that paves the way for Paul's expounding of it in chapter 11 is introduced in chapter 10, verses 35 through 39.

Hebrews 10:35-39 Cast not away therefore your confidence which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God you might receive the promise. For

yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.
Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

This is not the first time that faith, or its opposite—"unbelief"—has been mentioned in Hebrews. The very purpose of the entire book is to recapture, build, and sustain the faith of those to whom it is written in the superiority of Jesus Christ as a person and His message—the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

We are going to go back to Hebrews 3:12, and then verses 18 and 19, on through chapter 4, verse 2. Now "unbelief," in this case, begins to come into the picture of the context of the book.

Hebrews 3:12-13 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3:18-19 And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believe not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

He is talking about Israel in the wilderness.

Hebrews 4:1-2 Let us therefore fear, lest the promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Now these, as taken to heart, are really heavy statements, because Paul is saying that the Israelites failed to accomplish their responsibility of walking from Egypt to the Promised Land primarily because of one weak element in their character: faith. They did not believe God nor His messenger Moses. They were not thoughtfully, yieldingly listening and comparing what they were seeing with their eyes with what they were hearing from God and His messenger.

Because Hebrews 10: 35-39, chapter 11 places the virtue of faith directly in contrast to the sin of unbelief, by showing what unbelief caused to occur. Paul wants people to be saved, but people were lost because of unbelief.

What do those verses in Hebrews 10 tell us, especially verses 38 and 39? They tell us that the Israelites drew back in fear rather than going forward in faith, and they died. Thus, the major point of the entire book of Hebrews is that those who shrink back from this war we are called to fight, by failing to put their trust in the living God, are destroyed; whereas those who believe are saved.

A clear understanding of faith in this context of Hebrews 11, and especially within the context of the whole book of Hebrews, largely depends upon how that first verse of Hebrews 11 is translated.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The Greek word translated "substance" is *hypostasis*. It literally means "standing under." A bit more complex definition is that *hypostasis* is that which underlies what is apparent. Expanded a bit is that *hypostasis* is that which, though unseen, exists under what *is* seen; hence, *hypostasis* has the sense of foundation, and thus, even as the foundation of a building is unseen, the building *above* ground *is* seen, or is apparent; but the foundation—the *hypostasis*—is nonetheless still there. It is the unseen support to what is standing in clear view, and thus spiritually, the invisible-to-human-eye's faith underlies, supports, and thus motivates the visible action.

Let me stretch that out a little bit. Thus spiritually, the invisible-to-human-eye's faith underlies, supports, and motivates the visible action containing confidence, assurance, trust, belief, conviction. Anyway if you want to drag out the meaning of the word "faith," there it is. It can be stated in many different ways depending upon the context.

I am going to carry this yet further, because that does not end the discussion of how *hypostasis* should be understood, because the question arises as to whether it should be understood *subjectively* or *objectively*. It can be used either way.

Now should faith be understood as a quality or a virtue *within* me, or within you? That use is "subjectively." Or should it be understood as something *not* a part of me, but as something on which I can rely? That use is "objectively."

Understand this: neither of these uses is wrong, but I believe that one is better than the other within the context of the entire book. So remember, "subjectively"—*within* me; "objectively"—*apart* from me, but I can lean on it.

If the translators believe it should be understood "subjectively," then that phrase will be translated like this: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for; certain of what we do not see." This form emphasizes conviction—an internal certainty concerning what we believe. Other translations may say something like this: "Faith in things hoped for becomes a reality." That too is a subject of approach.

Now if the translators believe it should be understood "objectively," then the phrase will be translated: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for," or "Faith is the title deed of things hoped for." That is "*objectively*." It is something *you* can rely upon. It is not within you. It is something that you can rely upon. It emphasizes something outside the person that can be relied upon.

This issue is not an easy matter, but do not forget I told you that neither use of them is wrong, but I personally believe that "subjectively"—that is, conviction within you—is better, based on the tenor of the entire book. It is true that Paul spends some time reminding the Hebrews of

how great what they believe in is better than anything ever before offered to mankind, and *that* by itself would require an *objective* interpretation; however, the real problem the book reveals was within the hearts of the Hebrews.

To me, Paul was exhorting those people who were letting the things of God slip away from them through personal neglect. They had become weary in well-doing. The world was wearing away at them. It was not that they did not have something to believe in—that *subjective*—because Hebrews clearly states they formerly had done much better. He said, "Recall to mind the former days when you accomplished so much."

What had they lost? They had lost their conviction. The truths were still there. They could be relied on, but it was what was within *them* that had slipped away. So through their lack of conviction, and thus their neglectful personal application, they were slip-sliding away. So the "subjective" faith was the issue, and Paul several times urged them to recall former days and recapture the bold confidence they had then.

Thus to me, neither of these approaches is wrong, but personally I believe that the "subjective" one is better, and therefore I think it should be better translated: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for; certain of what we do not see." They were no longer certain. They were no longer sure, and thus Paul means the believer is convinced the things he is unable to see regarding God are real, and therefore acts from that perspective in fullness of hope.

Many claim to believe God, but what influence does that belief have on their acts? These are unconvinced people—people without conviction that are seeking only an intellectual righteousness; such belief is without certainty, and thus it lackadaisically gradually retreats instead of going forth in growth. Such had the Hebrews become, under the pressure of the time and their trials.

I said earlier that the introduction of this chapter appears earlier in chapter 10, when faith is directly spoken of, but there is also a secondary subject that motivated the writing of chapter 11, and it appears in chapter 10 as well, in verse 36.

Hebrews 10:36 For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God you might receive the promise.

It is that word "patience." Again, there is ample material in the book as to why "patience" needed to be addressed. However, there are better words than "patience" that should be substituted for a better understanding for us today, even though "patience" is not a wrong translation. The different words are more helpful because "patience" is largely understood today as being passive; so, better translations would be "to persevere" or "to endure."

The Greek word used here, transliterated is *hupomone*. Zodhiates says that this word means "constancy under suffering in faith and duty." Notice he does not say "patience." Zodhiates is a modern translator. He uses the word "constancy," because constancy indicates effort being made against something. Now perhaps even better (again from Zodhiates) in light of this series on warfare... Listen to what he says that word means. He says that word means "a quality of character that does not allow one to surrender." Boy! That really captures the essence. A

Christian is going to go down fighting. If he is going to go down, he is going to go down fighting, but he is not going to give up his position.

Perseverance, endurance, constancy, and steadfastness all have a sense of activity, of actively straining against some pressure, and thus as we enter chapter 11, two related subjects are being approached: one directly—faith that is a strong conviction; the other less directly—perseverance. That word never appears again until chapter 12, verse 1 where Paul says, "let us run with perseverance," or with endurance, which is a much better usage than the use of the word "patience."

Both qualities were badly needed by the Hebrews to meet their problems. Conviction and perseverance go hand in hand. They really cannot be separated because we operate on a different time-concept than God does. But compared to God, it seems as though we are always on fast time. Almost everything has to be done or received right now. Our faith begins to evaporate and we lose heart.

True faith operates in a time-realm closer to what God operates on because it is more in tune with Him because of conviction. It, therefore, not only believes that what God says is true, but also trusts and willingly endures its trials in an attitude of realistic hopefulness, not restlessly complaining to God that He fix things right away on our time schedule. Conviction is developed through much thoughtful listening, processing, and yielding, comparing what one learns from God for the evidence He supplies, and thus producing the right works.

Hebrews 11:2 For by it [faith] the elders obtained a good report.

This continues setting the stage by stating faith's importance in the sense of what others who have gone before us have accomplished in living by faith. By doing so, God approved of their lives. An implied notion is that if they could do it, why cannot we? The same God is still on the throne supplying all of our needs. We remember that God, through His message given through Jesus Christ, is the object of *our* trust as it was the object of *their* trust; so God is on His throne, and true evidence still exists—evidence that we can put all of our trust in, and be convicted by.

There is nobody else in the entire world that should desire to please God above us. This is an important point in regard to faith, because *this* faith must be lived *toward* God. It is very easy for this attitude of living life to be oriented toward pleasing humans. Please understand that this is not denied us by God, but pleasing God must dominate and be chosen as primary to life, or conviction has little chance of growing. So we want to be like the ancients, and we have to make use of the evidence God gives to us, and thoughtfully consider it.

Hebrews 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

This further continues the laying of the foundation, because the concept here reveals that the solid foundation of faith is toward God, as He is the Creator. That is where it begins. That is the building block. God Himself brought this up to Job. He said to Job, "Where were you when I laid

the foundation of the earth?" Well, the answer to that question is why we are able to understand the existence of things by faith.

I think that Bullinger had a different thought regarding this verse worth mentioning. It is different from what you will find in most commentaries. He takes this beyond creation, and he does so because the word that is translated worlds in verse 3—"Through faith we understand that the worlds"—is literally the word *aion*, and should really be translated "ages." It is a period of time.

That verse is literally stating that the *ages* were framed, or put into order by God. That is what the word "framed" means. It means "shaped" or "put into order by God." Thus Bullinger shows that God, unseen and sovereign, not only is Creator, but He actively shapes the expanses of time. He is always working, as Jesus said in John 5:17: "My Father works hitherto, and I work." God is directing the movements of history *within* those expanses of time, bringing them to the end that He desires. Again, this is a personal preference, but I personally prefer Bullinger's approach as more appropriate to the entire book.

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaks.

It is right here that we begin to see the contrast between faith and unbelief, and they are seen in the practical applications made by these men. When he finishes speaking about Moses, he then mysteriously skips over Joshua, who was a man of faith, but includes Rahab the harlot. And then he starts throwing out names of judges, but not in chronological order, and then finally he names David (the second king) before Samuel, who was the last of the judges.

Paul probably knew why he did it, but I have not figured out yet why he did it that way. There is probably a story in that pattern. That is an obvious one, but you will notice that that exists. There is a pattern there, and it is good to understand the patterns in which God does things.

Now a much more important pattern is that each example of faith used in one's life is different from any of the others, and just as important, they are arranged in a progression important to Christian living. They go in a logical progression. This aspect will become more apparent as we wend our way through the chapter.

A third pattern to notice is that the whole chapter is a general, but powerful argument against the "no works" doctrine of those who profess such a strange and destructive concept. That is one of the most perverse ideas destructive to Christianity that I can possibly think of, because right after (we will say) the person repents, believes in Jesus Christ, is baptized, he is then told, "You are secure now in Christ, and you cannot lose this salvation." And if the person says, "What must I do?" He is then told, "Why, *nothing*. Works cannot save you." And so what does the person do? Well, if he is thinking, he becomes confused.

What is so weird and perverse about this is that Ephesians 2:10 says, as plainly as can possibly be put, that "we are created in Christ Jesus *for* good works, which God has foreordained that we should walk in them." Right after he says that "salvation is by grace through faith," he said "we

are created in Christ Jesus for good works."

You can tell that the faith of these people (given by Paul as examples in chapter 11) was not merely intellectual, and it most certainly was not dead. Paul is showing conclusively that what one says he believes in is absolutely useless unless it pleases God by producing works; works are the evidence of what the person has faith in—that is, what our faith-object is. Brethren, that is a major theme of the entire book of Hebrews. It was to get those Hebrew peoples turned around from doing nothing to doing something.

The Hebrews Paul wrote to claimed to be Christians, but when put through more-than-severe trials, their lack of faith—their doubt that God would provide for them—motivated them to draw back. Their lackadaisical and fearful works exposed their lack of faith in God, and thus they were slip-sliding away like the Israelites in the wilderness.

Now, for the fourth pattern that is there. Hebrews 11 is divided into three sections. The first is the introduction covered till the end of verse 3. We have already covered those. The second section is covered by the examples of Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Abel's example focuses on the beginning of Christian living. Enoch's example is focused on the character of the *life* of faith—that which Christian living consists. It is said very simply: "Enoch walked with God." That is what Christian life is all about—walking with God—given in a very simple, broad explanation.

Noah's example picks up on Enoch's, also showing what Christian living consists of, but above all, how it ends. He was saved. That ends. Then the third and major section of the whole chapter, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, focuses on what the faith of the remaining examples achieved by means of faith in God, because they were always looking beyond their own time of life. This is not to say that the first three did not achieve anything, only that achieving was not the focus of Paul's instruction at that point. With Abel, Enoch, and Noah, Paul was laying a general foundation to show how faith motivates a person's life.

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaks.

As the Bible records history, Abel is the first human to offer God his sacrifice. There is no indication that he was following what was popular among the children of Adam and Eve at the time, nor is there any indication that he was following common sense or human reason, or even his feelings.

There is no doubt that God instructed Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and many others in truth. Now Abel alone stands out because he offered "by faith." He believed the specific instructions given him. Neither Cain nor anybody else did. Abel's motivation was what set him apart. That is what sanctified him. He was sanctified by his faith. He believed, and it set him apart from everybody else. He believed without twisting what God instructed.

Let us recall Romans 10:17, again, where it says "Faith comes by hearing the word of God." Faith in God must have a foundation, and listening is the means through which it is formed. It is very important to understand what Paul, and of course God, means by "faith." There are two

general kinds of faith: "dead" and "living," as James termed them.

It is essential to understand that when James calls the one "dead," he is in no way saying that whoever has that faith is stupid. In fact, they may be quite intellectual—smart, intelligent. We might say they have a high I.Q. James is only saying that in relation to God, they do not have living faith.

Let me illustrate the difference in this way. Suppose two people receive exactly the same instruction from the word of God, and thus both of them have been informed as to what God requires. Now the difference between the person who has "dead" faith and the one who has "living" faith is found in that the one with "living" faith is also influenced to submit to what he heard.

The one with the "dead" faith remains only informed, and thus the "dead" faith person may enjoy using his word-of-God information to discuss, and even to argue for or against a given concept; however, it remains only information, because the influence to submit is lacking, and that person cannot honestly be said to believe, even though the information he has may be quite expansive and true.

By way of contrast, the "living" faith person believes, and submits, making active use by changing his life to conform to what pleases God. It is that simple. The person who believes is influenced to submit, and he does. The other person may be far more intellectual and smarter, but he does not submit; therefore he does not believe. He knows what it says, and he will argue and argue that what he has in his mind is right, and it probably *is* right, but he does not submit to it.

There are plenty of people who are convinced by reading the Bible that the Sabbath ought to be kept, but they do not keep it. They believe that it is true, but they do not do it. I have gotten letters from people who say, "Yes, the Holy Days ought to be kept too," but they do not keep them. They believe the argument, and they are not dumb people in any way shape or form. They just do not submit, and therefore, as James explains, they have "dead" faith. They believe intellectually, but they do not believe in a practical way. That is why Hebrews 11:1 is so important. It is giving you a practical application of faith. It works in God's behalf.

The "dead" faith person hears outwardly. The "living" faith person hears outwardly, and inwardly, and he yields to it, believing it. This person has what the Bible calls *the faith*. It is also the faith that Paul says in Galatians 5:6: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love." That is the faith we want. That is the faith we need—the faith that *works* by and through love. And what is love? It is the keeping of the commandments. That is what I John 5:3 says. Love is obedience to God, so we can reach a conclusion here. The gift of faith in us from God has its foundation in love—God's love for us.

If God did not love us, we would have no faith in Him. But once we receive that faith, then what happens? We submit, and we give the love right back to Him—faith which works through love.

The living faith is faith that keeps the commandments. It produces. It is *this* faith that is on view all the way through chapter 11. In the case of Abel, I think it is most likely that the word of God *he* heard was that which God spoke to Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve then instructed Cain

and Abel. Abel heard it from them, and he believed. Cain heard the same words, and was merely informed.

Now what did they hear that pertains to chapter 11 and verse 4? We are going to go back to Genesis 3, and we will conclude this sermon right here. We are going to begin in verse 7 and go all the way through verse 20.

Genesis 3:7-19 And the eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where are you? And he said, I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree whereof I commanded you that you should not eat? And the man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that you have done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled [or deceived] me, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because you have done this you are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life: And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. 1Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you. And unto Adam he said, Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for you sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread till you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return.

Let us go back to the nakedness. It has a very wide usage as a symbol. At its very best, it indicates innocence, childlike simplicity and vulnerability. At its worst, it symbolizes humiliation, guilt, shame, and punishment. It was humiliation, guilt, and shame that Adam and Eve were attempting to hide when they grabbed a few fig leaves to be a covering.

There is a very interesting spiritual lesson and understanding and application of the symbolism here. Adam and Eve threw together just any old thing at the moment, and right off the bat, one can understand that what they chose to cover themselves physically with was totally inadequate

for them spiritually as well as physically. We are more concerned with the "spiritual" here. Their effort was immediately rejected, and that is the major instruction of this vignette.

A secondary instruction is that many, many carnal people today think it matters not what they physically wear before God at services. Oh, yes it does! In like manner, people today show up at worship services wearing any kind of casual clothing. In fact the churches invite them to do so. They advertise themselves as "casual," and sometimes this reflects a matter of ignorance, that they just do not know any better. But at other times it reveals a serious matter of disrespect for the *primary* covering, which is Christ's sacrifice, as we shall see shortly.

It is good to remember the overall principle to appear before God covered with acceptable covering. The symbolic instruction carries through to both physical and spiritual aspects, and the person who cares what God thinks will do his best to conform. God covered Adam and Eve with truly fine clothing. That is our example, showing us it does matter what we wear before God. God put *good* clothing on them.

The second element the context takes us one step further into the spiritual aspects, and the person who cares what God thinks will do his best to conform.

Now regarding the covering... What humans devise regarding covering spiritual nakedness is in reality worthless. The third element clarifies further that God Himself must supply the only covering that is spiritually adequate, which is Christ's sacrifice.

The fourth element is that spiritually, the only adequate covering is by means of death. Death covers sin.

Now as with the first point regarding the clothing, there are two elements of instruction here. "The wages of sin is death," and so the principle involved here is always that we are to *give* our best to the Master. In a spiritual sense, the entire human race sinned in Adam and Eve, and since the wages of sin is death, *all* of us must be paid that wage, or another. An innocent One—One in whom death has no claim because He never sinned—must pay in our stead.

It is right there that we are going to leave this sermon, because I do not want to get into the next part; it involves a fairly lengthy explanation. But you know that that covering is Jesus Christ, and that Abel offered his offering by faith in that sacrifice even though it did not take place for about four thousand years after that point in time.

Remember what I said. All these people were looking ahead and allowing that to be the motivation for what they did with their lives, because they believed what God said. Abel believed the only adequate substitute-covering for his sin was the blood that represented the living One against whom sin had no claim—Jesus Christ.

That is it for today, and God willing, I will be back again with you next week, and I hope the remainder of the Sabbath is very profitable to you.