

Commentary on Hebrews Chapters 11, by Chuck Smith 10.27.24

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October Memory Verse, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

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

This is not so much a definition of faith as it is the declaration of what faith does. It is the substance of things that are hoped for. And the word *substance* there has been translated in the new versions the *substantiating* of the things that we hope for. And the *evidence*, that word has been translated *conviction* of the things not seen. I'm convicted of truths, though I may not have seen them, I'm convicted of their existence. There is evidence for the existence of God, and it causes me to believe in God. Though I have never seen God, the evidence of His existence creates that faith in my heart.

For by it [that is, by faith] the elders obtained a good report (Hbr 11:2).

Now here is evidence of what men have wrought by faith. And as he starts to...well, before he gets into it, he starts with just the creation of the world itself.

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 (Hbr 11:3).

Interesting statement, especially from a scientific standpoint. The Bible said that God said, "Let there be light." God said, "Let the waters above the firmament be divided from the waters beneath the firmament." God said, "Let the earth bring forth herb yielding seed after its kind." God said... and so we believe that God spoke the seen world into existence so that the things which we do see were made out of things which do not appear.

An example, really, of faith or an evidence of faith, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. So God took unseen things and made the material, seen universe in which we live, the worlds. Now looking at that a little more closely, God made the world out of things that do not appear.

Now he begins to list those men of faith from the Old Testament. And he lists them in chronological order, as far as their appearances in the Bible, until you get to David and Samuel, and only there does he reverse the chronological order.

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The first to appear on the scene of faith was Abel.

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 (Hbr 11:4).

In other words, the example speaks to us today of Abel, who offered his sacrifice to God through faith. It was because of his faith that he was declared by God to be righteous.

Now there has been a lot made over the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. How that Cain, being a farmer, brought the fruit of the ground unto the Lord. Probably brought some of his produce that he had cultivated, whereas Abel, being a husbandman, brought a lamb unto God as a sacrifice. When they offered their sacrifices unto the Lord, the Lord accepted Abel's sacrifice, but He rejected Cain's. Now, just how this was demonstrated, we do not know. But when Cain saw that his offering was rejected and Abel's was accepted, he was angry with the Lord for rejecting his offering. And the Lord said unto him, "Why are you angry that your offering was rejected? If it was rejected, it was because sin lies at your door." And declaring, basically, that if it were offered properly it would have been accepted; if his heart was right.

There has been a lot made over the fact that one was a blood sacrifice and the other was not a blood sacrifice, but an offering of the fruit of the ground. Many have suggested that that is the reason why God accepted Abel's, because he offered a blood sacrifice and rejected Cain's, because it was really the product of the works of his own hands that he brought to the Lord. And a lot has been made over that. But in the commentary here in Hebrews it tells us the reason why one was rejected and the other was accepted, is one was offered in faith and the other was offered not with faith, just the works of man's hands.

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God (Hbr 11:5).

What a great testimony. Here's a man that declares he pleased God. That is the very purpose of our existence, to bring pleasure to God. In the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, where John sees the cherubim about the throne of God, worshipping the Lord, declaring the holiness and eternal character of God. The twenty-four elders fall on their faces before the throne and take their crowns and cast them on the glassy sea and they say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor; for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). Basic fact of our existence--you were created for God's pleasure. A person who lives for their own pleasure is living out of sync with God. It is interesting how that a person living for their own pleasure is constantly pursuing pleasure, constantly trying to find something new, something different, some new sensation. Enoch had the testimony that he pleased God.

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Now we are told,

For without faith it is impossible to please God (Hbr 11:6):

So the witness of faith. It was through faith that Abel was declared righteous by the Lord and accepted by God. Through faith, Enoch, as he walked with God, was translated that he should not see death, but before then he had this witness: he pleased God. How did he please God? Through his faith. For without faith it is impossible to please God.

for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him (Hbr 11:6).

So you, first of all, have to believe in the existence of God, but then you have to believe that God is good; God rewards those who diligently seek Him.

The next example is that of Noah.

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet (Hbr 11:7),

Faith--the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Up until the time of Noah, it had never rained upon the earth. The earth was watered by a mist that came out of the ground every evening. There was, no doubt, a very heavy moisture blanket around the earth as God divided the waters above the firmament from the waters beneath the firmament. And this heavy water blanket in the atmosphere no doubt accounted for the discoveries in the geological stratas of asparagus ferns sixty or seventy feet tall. It probably accounted for the longevity of life, averaged nine hundred years or so. For the moisture blanket shielded the earth from much of the cosmic radiation which causes mutation of the cells and the breakdown and the aging process.

The period of the antediluvians with the long life and with the tremendous growth of plants and trees, they'd never seen rain before. God said that He was going to cause it to rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. Noah tried to warn the people of the impending flood that was going to come, and they mocked him. For a hundred years he was building this giant ship out in an area that had never known rain. Preacher of righteousness...

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with reverence, he prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Hbr 11:7).

Again, the whole idea here in the chapter is that it is through faith that a person is accounted righteous before God. It is believing in God that is the most important, not my works; they follow. Works will logically automatically follow my faith. But works cannot produce faith, nor can they substitute for faith. Faith does work. I cannot say that I believe with all of my heart without my life conforming to what I believe. There has to be that conformity, but faith has to come first. My faith in God provokes my works for God.

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Now Noah condemned the world by his belief and faith in God, and he became the heir of the righteousness, which is by faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he was going (Hbr 11:8).

God first said to Abraham, "Get out of this place, out of the land of your fathers, and go unto a land that I will show you." Now oftentimes as God is leading us, He leads us just one step at a time, and that is our problem. I don't like being led one step at a time. If He tells me to get out, I want Him to tell me where to go. I like two steps or three or four. I like Him to spell out the whole thing. Maybe I don't want to do what He's got in mind when we get down the road.

"So by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing where he was going."

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise (Hbr 11:9):

So here, when he came to the land and he stood on Bethel, the center of the land, good vantage point, God said, "Look to the north, the east, the south and the west as far as you can see, Abraham. I've given you this land unto your seed forever. It's yours." And so he journeyed through the land. He went down to Hebron and back up to the area of Shechem. But he was as a stranger and a pilgrim there. He lived in tents. He didn't build any cities. He didn't build any homes. He just lived in tents, though the whole land was his by the promise of God. Yet, he dwelt in it as a stranger.

For he was looking for [the eternal city of God,] a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith Sara herself received strength to conceive, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised (Hbr 11:10-11).

As we read of these people of great faith, we see that they made their mark in history because of their faith. When Sarah comes on the scene, her faith is spoken of that in her old age (she was over ninety), had never had a child. And yet, she received strength to conceive seed and bore the son, though she was past age, because she judged Him faithful.

You remember, though, that Sarah's faith wasn't always so perfect. A lot of times as we read of these people of faith, we sort of think them out of our category. They're sort of super saints. "I can never attain to that." But when the Lord was talking to Abraham concerning his son that He was going to give to him, Abraham said, "O Lord, let Ishmael live before thee!" And the Lord said, "I will bless Ishmael and make of him a nation, but Sarah is going to bear a child, and through Sarah shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 17:18-21). Well, she was eavesdropping over in the tent, listening to what the Lord was

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saying to Abraham. When the Lord said to him, "Through Sarah your seed be called," she started laughing. That's incredulous! And so the angel of the Lord said, "Why did Sarah laugh?" And she said, "I wasn't laughing" (Genesis 18:13-15). It was significant when the child was born they named him laughter, Isaac, which means laughter, because they laughed at how incredulous it seemed that Sarah should conceive in her old age and bear a son.

Therefore there sprang even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and the sand which is by the seashore innumerable (Hbr 11:12).

So there sprung forth from Abraham an innumerable host of people.

These all died in faith (Hbr 11:13),

These all died in faith, not having received the promises (Hbr 11:13),

That is, the promises of the Messiah that God had given to them. They believed in God's salvation that He promised that He would provide. They all died in faith not having received the promises,

but having seen them afar off, they were persuaded of them, and they [held on to them] embraced them, and they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hbr 11:13).

So they had the proper attitude towards the world, proper perspective of life. I'm only a stranger and a pilgrim here. I'm satisfied to dwell in a tent. This isn't my home. I'm passing through. I'm just a transient here. I am looking for my permanent home. I'm looking for my dwelling with God in His eternal kingdom. And so they saw the promises. They were given the promises of the kingdom of God. Abraham looked for that city which had foundation whose maker and builder was God. He was looking for the kingdom of God and confessing that, "I'm not permanent here. I'm just passing through. I'm a stranger and a pilgrim to this earth. I belong to the heavenly kingdom, a citizen of that heavenly kingdom." So they saw the promises. They were persuaded of the truth of the promises. They embraced or held on to the promises and they made their confession. I'm just a stranger and a pilgrim here.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they are seeking for a country. Now truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned (Hbr 11:14-15).

When they came to Haran, he could have turned around and gone back into Babylon. You can always turn back. But they journeyed on in obedience to God.

But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Hbr 11:16).

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This is interesting: God is not ashamed to be called their God. It may indicate that God is ashamed that some people call Him God. The way the people act I wouldn't blame Him.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence he also received him in a figure (Hbr 11:17-19).

Here is some outstanding insight on the story of Abraham offering up his son Isaac to the LORD.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said, "The gospel that I declared unto you, how that Christ died according to the scriptures, and was buried according to the scriptures, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:1-4). He, of course, was referring to the Old Testament scriptures. We know that there was predicted in the Old Testament the death of Christ. Isaiah 53, "numbered with the transgressors in His death." And Psalms 22, "soul poured out to death." We know that the scriptures prophesied He would be buried and made His grave with the rich.

But where in the Old Testament is there a prophecy of His rising again the third day? It was prefigured in Jonah, and Jesus brought that out, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). But where in the scripture, the Old Testament, does it speak of the resurrection after three days? And we go to the story of Abraham, where God said unto Abraham, "Abraham," and he said, "Here am I." "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, and offer him as a sacrifice in the place that I will show you" (Genesis 22:2).

"Take now thy son, thine only son," God said. Was Isaac his only son? No, he had another son by Hagar named Ishmael, who was some thirteen years older than Isaac. But as God said, "Through Isaac shall thy seed be called." So that God did not recognize Abraham's work of the flesh. He only recognized that work of the spirit, the son of promise, Isaac. Again, we usually in our minds picture Isaac, because of the Sunday school papers that we had, of being maybe eight to ten years old. So we see this one hundred year old Abraham, one hundred and eight at this time, leading this little eight-year-old boy towards Mount Moriah where he is going to offer him as a human sacrifice unto God. The idea being of God asking Abraham to give the most cherished possession that he had to Him. Testing Abraham. "Will you hold back anything from Me, Abraham?"

Isaac was probably twenty-seven years old by this time, not leading a little boy. The scripture would indicate that he's in his late twenties probably at this point. So that means Abraham was probably one hundred and twenty-five by this time. And Isaac, being in the prime of his youth, could have easily overpowered his Dad and said, "Okay,

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Dad, that's enough. What's going on here?" Isaac was willingly submissive to the father's will.

For three days they journeyed from Hebron, and in the mind of Abraham, for those three days his son Isaac was dead, because he knew that God had required that he offer him as a sacrifice in the place that He would show him. After three days the Lord showed to Abraham Mount Moriah. And so Abraham said to the servants, "You wait here. I and the lad will go and will worship God and will come again."

Now Abraham figures God's got a problem, because God has said, "Through Isaac shall thy seed be called." Isaac has not yet had any children. Isaac has to have children, because God has to keep His word. Now, I don't know how God's going to do it. I know God will do it. I know that God's word is faithful. God's word is true. God will keep His word. And God has said, "Now offer Isaac," so I'll offer Isaac, but somehow God's gotta work some kind of a miracle, because Isaac doesn't have any children yet, and through Isaac the nation is to be developed. So be believed, notice, he believed that God was able to raise him up really from the dead. He believed in the resurrection. God is able to raise this boy up from the dead if necessary to keep His promise to me, "Through Isaac shall thy seed be called."

So he was going on sheer faith in the word of God, "Through Isaac shall thy seed be called." I'll do it. God has to do something, raise him from the dead or something, because I and the lad will go and we will come again.

And so as Isaac was with his father now, the two of them walking towards Moriah, Isaac said, "Father, here is the wood and we've got the fire, but where is the sacrifice? You're forgetting something, Dad." And Abraham said, "Son, the Lord will provide Himself a sacrifice" ([Genesis 22:7-8](#)). Interesting prophecy. He'll not provide a sacrifice for Himself. He will provide Himself a sacrifice.

And when they came to Mount Moriah, Abraham bound Isaac, and put him on the altar, raised the knife, and God said, "Okay far enough, Abraham. Hold it. I know that you will not withhold anything from Me. Behold, there is a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. Offer it on the altar." So Abraham took the ram, and offered it on the altar. And he called the name of the place Jehovah-Jireh. And then he prophesied, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." ([Genesis 22:10-14](#)). Jehovah sees. The word is, "Jehovah has vision." We translate it, "Jehovah will provide." Well, the word *provide*, the base word of provide is *vision*, provision. With God there is very little difference between vision and provision. God sees, God is going to take care of it. The Lord will provide.

In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. All right, "Take now thy son, thine only son." "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

As Isaac was three days and three nights dead in the mind of his father, so Jesus three days and three nights before His resurrection. Interesting! Coincidental? It was on Mount Moriah where the cross was placed upon which Jesus died. The mount of the

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Lord, where Abraham offered his son Isaac, two thousand years later God offered His only begotten Son. And God provided Himself a sacrifice for our sins, for God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

Now, if we did not have Hebrews to give us a commentary on the story of Abraham, we, too, could be confused at God's demand. But we read here that it was through absolute faith in the word of God that Abraham was willing to go through this whole experience, believing so powerfully in the word of God that he knew that God would, if necessary, raise Isaac from the dead in order that He might fulfill His word, "Through Isaac shall they seed be called."

So accounting that God was able to raise him even from the dead, "from whence also he received him in a figure." In other words, he was an impossible child anyhow. He was a miracle child. His birth was long beyond any natural possibility for birth, and so he was in a sense received from the dead, a miracle child to begin with. And he knew that God having given him by a miracle, could also by a miracle sustain him until the promise of God was fulfilled through Isaac.

Continuing down through history.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning the things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both of the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, as he leaned on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones ([Hbr 11:20-22](#)).

So, following the family line. The faith of the father, Abraham, passed on to Isaac, who by faith blessed his two sons, Jacob and Esau, and prophesied of the things to come. By faith, then, Jacob himself blessed his sons and the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. And now by faith Joseph, when he was about ready to die, he was in Egypt, had great authority and power in Egypt, but he knew that one day the people of God must go back and possess the land that God had promised to Abraham. He knew that they weren't going to be in Egypt forever. And so he made them promise, "Now when you return to the land, I want you to take my bones out of Egypt and take them back to the land." So knowing that God's word was to be fulfilled that the land would one day be theirs, some three hundred years later after the death of Joseph, when the children of Israel began their trek from Egypt to the Promise Land, with them they carried the mummy of Joseph to bury it in the land of promise.

By faith Moses ([Hbr 11:23](#)),

Moving on ahead now, a jump of several hundred years here.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment ([Hbr 11:23](#)).

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The Pharaoh had commanded that all of the Hebrew boys be thrown into the Nile River-drowned. For he was afraid that the Hebrews, because they were having so many children, would become a threat to the security of Egypt. As they began to multiply more rapidly than the Egyptians, he could foresee the day when they would be stronger and overthrow the Egyptians and make the Egyptians their slaves. So, he ordered all of the baby boys to be drowned in the Nile. When Moses was born, by faith his parents hid him. They disobeyed the order of the Pharaoh. They saw he was a beautiful child. They were not afraid of the king's commandment.

By faith Moses, when he was come of age (Hbr 11:24),

Which in this particular case was forty years old. Having been schooled in the schools of Egypt in the sciences and the arts, Moses having been raised in the Pharaoh's palace, having been adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter, having at his disposal all of the riches of Egypt, all of the glory of Egypt.

By faith Moses, when he came of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Hbr 11:24-25);

He made a very interesting choice. He could have just gone on as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and enjoyed through his lifetime the pleasures of sin, but that would have been a very short time, though he lived to be one hundred twenty, still short in comparison to the fact that he has been gone for 3,700 years now. But he chose, rather, to identify himself with God's people; suffering the affliction of God's people than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He realized that the pleasures of sin are not lasting. You may give yourself over to indulgence. You may find great pleasure and excitement in the indulging of your flesh, but it doesn't last. It grows old quickly.

Moses made the choice, a wise choice indeed.

For he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Hbr 11:26):

So on the one side you have the son of Pharaoh's daughter, with all of the glory of the royal palace. You have the riches of Egypt at your disposal. On the other side you have the affliction of the people of God, the reproach of Christ. You have the immediate advantage and the eternal advantage to choose. Moses wisely chose the eternal over the immediate. God, give us that kind of wisdom that in our choices we will take eternity into view. That we will not just take that which seems to be so exciting, and temporarily beneficial, but that we'll look and find out where the path leads. What is the end of the story? What is the end of the path? Moses by faith chose the path of suffering affliction over the path of ease and glory, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because

he had respect unto the recompense of the reward (Hbr 11:26).

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Because he looked at the eternal aspect, the eternal reward, the eternal reward of following Jesus Christ. The eternal reward of living for Him so far outweighs any temporal advantage that I might have in living after the flesh.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible (Hbr 11:27).

The secret of his endurance, that ability to see God and to see the work of God and the hand of God. And if I can see the hand of God in my hour of suffering, if I can see the hand of God in the moment of trial or affliction, then I can endure. When I start to get weak, and I start to question and I start to say, "Why, God?" If I can only just come to the realization that all things are working together for good to those who love God and that God has a purpose, and when I can see God then I can endure. I can say, "Well, God, I don't understand, but You've got a reason and a plan," and I endure as seeing Him who is invisible. The substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Seeing Him.

Through faith he kept the passover (Hbr 11:28),

The final plague upon the Egyptians was to be the death of the first-born child of every family in Egypt. The Lord said, "I'll pass through the land this night and the firstborn in every house will be slain. Command the children of Israel that they take a lamb out of their flock, the first year, to kill it and put the blood in a basin and with hyssop sprinkle the blood upon the lintels and on the doorposts." Sprinkling on the lintels and the doorposts, interestingly enough, gives you the sprinkling in the shape of a cross. God said, "And when I pass through the land tonight and I see the blood, I will pass over that house and the first-born will be spared." The lamb sacrificed for the house. The substitutionary lamb preserving the firstborn. The lamb dying instead of the firstborn, and there we get a very beautiful picture of the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who died in our place that we might have life.

And so by faith he kept the Passover,

lest the destroying of the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry land: and the Egyptians attempting to do it were drowned (Hbr 11:28-29).

Moving ahead, the successor to Moses was Joshua.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about for seven days (Hbr 11:30).

In the city of Jericho there lived a woman whose name was Rahab, who had received the spies that Joshua had sent. And who delivered them from the inhabitants of Jericho.

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace (Hbr 11:31).

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The author than says,

What more can I say? I don't have time to tell about Gideon [now we're in the book of Judges], Barak, Samson, Jephthae (Hbr 11:32);

These are all men from the book of Judges who became judges of Israel and who through their faith delivered the children of Israel from their enemies.

Going on from the book of Judges to

David (Hbr 11:32),

It's interesting to me that David doesn't get much mention here, just his name listed.

and then Samuel (Hbr 11:32),

And as I said, this is the only place where the chronological order is broken. Samuel is listed after David and so that's the only break in the chronology. And the writer probably was in his mind just taking from the beginning the men of the Old Testament who by faith their lives were made outstanding.

Now here's what they did through faith.

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, they wrought righteousness, they obtained promises, they stopped the mouths of lions, [probably referring to Daniel] they quenched the violence of fire, [probably referring to the three Hebrew children delivered from the fiery furnace] they escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness they were made strong, they waxed valiant in fight, and they turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again (Hbr 11:33-35):

This is the first section. In the first section is pretty much powerful, positive kind of reactions and responses to their faith. These are the positive sides to faith: the subduing of kingdoms, obtaining the promises, stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, made strong out of their weakness, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens and women receiving their dead to life again.

But the man of faith can also know defeat and discouragement. Being a man of faith doesn't mean that you will always going to have healing, you're always going to have victory, you're always going to drive a Maserati, you're never going to have any trouble. Because as it goes on,

others were tortured, not accepting deliverance (Hbr 11:35);

Their faith caused them to make their stand firm for God and they were tortured for their faith. It is possible for a person to be victorious over the enemy, to wax valiant in battle, to subdue the aliens, but it is also possible for the man of faith to be tortured for his faith. God doesn't always deliver those who believe and trust in Him. We mustn't think of God, "If I trust in Him, He will surely deliver me." This is the fallacy of this "Faith Gospel" teaching today. It looks at only the first half of the list and ignores the second half of the

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list, but that isn't reality. Through faith they believed to the point of not accepting deliverance. They were tortured.

This happened to the early church. James was beheaded by Herod. Steven was stoned to death. Men of faith and yet men who were tortured for their faith.

Not accepting deliverance,

that they might obtain a better resurrection (Hbr 11:35):

It's better to have a resurrection unto eternal life than resurrection unto damnation, and that they might have that better resurrection unto eternal life.

And others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, [as was Zechariah and also, as thought, Jeremiah] they were sawn asunder [or sawed in two] (Hbr 11:36-37),

Isaiah, that marvelous prophet that we've enjoyed his revelations. Manasseh the evil son of Hezekiah ordered him sawed in two. Great man of faith, marvelous spiritual insights

They were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy (Hbr 11:37-38):

What a statement, remarkable statement, concerning these men. The world wasn't worthy of them and yet, what things they endured as the result of their faith in God.

they wandered in deserts, and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth [Elijah]. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise (Hbr 11:38-39):

Though they all believed, and here's the good report of them, yet though they died in faith, they did not receive the promise.

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (Hbr 11:40).

They all died in faith, believing the promise that God would, indeed, send His salvation through His Son. They all believed that there would be made the provision for their sins by God. God had promised that this should be. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we've turned everyone to our own ways, but God will lay on Him the iniquities of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). And they believed the promise of God that He would provide salvation, and they died believing that promise of God. But yet, in their death they did not enter into the kingdom of God and into that eternal glory. The sacrifices that they made were all made in faith as they looked forward to the sacrifice that God would one day make when He would send His only begotten Son. But the sacrifices they made could not put away sin. All they did was point to the future when God would provide the perfect sacrifice through His only begotten Son. So when they died they did not enter in to the

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heavenly kingdom, but they had to wait (in Paradise) for the promise of God to be fulfilled.

In Luke's gospel, the sixteenth chapter, Jesus said, "There was a certain rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, and there was a poor man that was brought daily and laid at his gate, covered with sores, and the dogs would come and lick his sores. And he would eat the scraps of food that were thrown to him from the rich man's table. And it came to pass that the poor man died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; moreover also the rich man died. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment. Seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus there being comforted in Abraham's bosom, said, 'Father Abraham, send Lazarus to me, that he might take his finger and dip it in water, and touch my tongue; for I am tormented in this heat.' But Abraham said, 'Son, do you remember that in your lifetime you had the good things, and Lazarus the evil? Now he is comforted while you are tormented. And beside this, there is a gulf that is fixed between us, so it is impossible for those that are here to come over there, and for those that are there to come over here.' He responded, 'I pray thee then, if he can not come to me, please send him back to warn my brothers that they don't come to this awful place.' Abraham said, 'They have the law and the prophets; if they will not believe the law and the prophets, neither would they believe, even though one came back from the dead.'"

Jesus taught that prior to His death hell was divided into the two compartments; those who were being comforted by Abraham, Lazarus being comforted in Abraham's bosom, Abraham the father of those who believe. As those who would follow the faithful steps of Abraham would die and would come into this compartment of hell, Abraham would say, "Don't worry, God's faithful. He promised and He'll send His Son. He'll send the Savior. We'll get out of here."

Isaiah, the sixty-first chapter, and the prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he has anointed me to preach the good tidings to the meek; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the day of the vengeance of our God." But He said, "I came to open the prison to those that were bound, setting the captive free." So we are told that when Jesus died for our sins He descended into hell and He preached, according to Peter, to those souls that were in prison. Now He came to set the prisoner free and to open the doors to those were captive, so that when Jesus rose, Matthew's gospel tells us in the twenty-seventh chapter, the graves of many of the saints were opened and were seen walking around the streets of Jerusalem after His resurrection.

Paul tells us that when He ascended He led the captives from their captivity. "For He who has ascended is the same one who first of all descended into the lower parts of the earth and when he ascended He led the captives from their captivity." He fulfilled that portion of the promise. He emptied that part of hell. Now, they all died in faith not having received the promise. They didn't die and enter into the kingdom of God, but they died and went with Abraham, being comforted by the man of faith that God would indeed

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keep His promise and be faithful to His word. And when Jesus came, He declared deliverance to the captive. "I've done it! Sin is now put away; the sacrifice is complete. We're going to break out of here." And He led the captives from their captivity; opened the prison doors to those who had been bound.

It is through Jesus Christ that the door has been made open into heaven. So as Jesus said to Martha grieving over her brother Lazarus, "If you live and believe in Me, you will never die." Oh, you'll be changed, yes, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Death is a metamorphosis. My spirit moves out of this old tent into the new house, a building of God not made with hands that is eternal in the heavens. While living in this tent I often groan earnestly desiring to be free, not that I would be unclothed or an unembodied spirit, but I want to be clothed upon with a body which is from heaven. For I know that as long as I am living in this body, I am absent from the Lord; but I would choose rather to be absent from this body, and to be present with the Lord.

"This corruption must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53). That's what death is to the child of God. The sting is gone. "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55) Jesus has removed the sting of death by taking away our sin. And thus, for the child of God, it's the glorious coronation day. This robe of flesh I'll drop and rise to receive the everlasting prize. What a glorious hope we have in Christ.

Now these of the Old Testament, theirs was a different case. They all died in faith not having received the promise, for you see, God provided some better thing for us. They, without the finished work of Christ, could not enter in to the kingdom of God. It was only through that finished work of Christ where was the door open as He preached to the souls in prison and led them from their captivity. But now ours is the victory. We enter in to the glorious promise of God. And to be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord.

Shall we pray.

Thank you, Father, for all that You have done for us. For that goodness, for the blessings, for the richness that is ours through Jesus Christ, for the promises and for the hope. O Lord our Lord how excellent is Thy name in all the earth. How excellent are Your works towards us your children. Lord, we thank You for the gift of faith, that you've given to each man a measure of faith. Lord, we pray that You will continue the work of Your Spirit within our hearts as we yield ourselves to You, to walk in fellowship with You through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, to live in that hope of eternal life in and through Him. Looking forward to that day when we shall be changed and fashioned like unto His own glorious image according to the mighty power of the Spirit of God that even works in our lives today. Lord, we believe and we trust and we know that Your Word is sure. Though heaven and earth may pass away, Your Word is something You will keep forever. Thank You, Lord for the unchanging promises upon which our souls are anchored this evening through Jesus Christ. Amen.