

The Book Of Hebrews

Part III

Practical Application of Doctrine to Life (10:19-13:25)

Lesson 10: (11:1-40)

Outline thus far.

Part I - Jesus, The Incarnate Son Of God (1:1-4:13).

- I. God's Final Word Spoken Through His Son (1:1-2:18).
- II. The Need For The Incarnation Explained (2:5-18).
- III. First Digression - Exhortation To "Hold Fast" And Warning Against Unbelief (3:1-4:13).

Part II - Jesus, Our Great High Priest (4:14-10:18).

- I. Jesus Qualified For Priesthood (4:14-5:11).
- II. Second Digression - Warning Against Apostasy And Encouragement To Perfection (5:12-6:20).
- III. Jesus A High Priest After The Order Of Melchizedek (7:1-28).
- IV. "A Ministry More Excellent" (8:1-10:18).

Part III - Practical Application of Doctrine to Life (10:19-13:25).

- I. The Impact This Teaching Is To Have (10:19-39).
 - A. Practical Consequences That Should Follow (10:19-25).
 - B. Warning Against Apostasy (10:26-31).
 - C. Encouragement To Endure Drawn From Remembrance Of Former Days (10:32-39).

II. Illustrations of the Power of Faith (11:1-40).

A. A description of faith (1:1).

Connection.

The relationship with the closing paragraph of ch. 10 should be noted. The writer has called for boldness and patience (35-38) and concluded that the Christian is not of that character that would draw back – rather he is one who will hold out to the end (39).

Definition and characteristics.

Definition. "... The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

characteristics.

1. The definition relates to the previously stated conviction that sustained the Hebrew Christians through the previous bout of persecution –a belief in the promises of God and a certain knowledge that they had a better and abiding possession in heaven (39). Then they treated those things not seen i.e., the promises not yet matured into actuality as being real. Theirs was not a blind unreasoning conviction – God had already provided ample evidence (2:3-4).
2. Faith deals with two elements (6): One is hope, the other is things unseen. Hope relates to the future whereas faith deals with the past (3), present (7) and future (27). It is that which imparts reality into the mind concerning things that are not seen.
3. Having set out what faith is, the writer then shows what it can do (2-40). "By faith" appears 15 times in ch. 11 (KJV). The chapter could be entitled, "The triumphs of faith".

B. Faith at the dawn of time (11:2-7).

By it a good report gained (2).

It lent credence to the Divine creation testimony (3; Gen 1:1ff.).

It equipped Abel to "offer a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (4; Gen 4:1-5).

The fact that it was by faith – he heard and obeyed (Rom 10:17) – is the only illumination to the reason for God's acceptance. The incident illustrates that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

By it Enoch pleased God and obtained witness that he was righteous (5-6; Mt 23:35; Gen 5:21-24).

By it Noah "prepared an ark for the saving of his household... and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (7).

Faith being "the evidence/conviction of things not seen" (1), the forecast of God became a reality to Noah and he trusted God building the ark where logic and everyday experience spoke against it, building it according to the design which God laid out (Gen 6:13-22).

C. The faith of Abraham and his family (11:8-22).

By it Abraham (8-11) ...

1. Obeyed and went to a land "which he would receive as an inheritance... not knowing where he was going" (8). Both elements of the description clearly exhibited.
2. Dwelt in the land of promise waiting for the city which has no foundations (9-10). Despite living in Canaan he did not own any land apart from that which he purchased as a burial plot (Gen 23).

By it Sarah received strength to bear a child when past the natural age (11-12).

This was a faith which was not immediately present. Compare the accounts in Gen 21:1-2, 5-7 and 18:9-15. In tandem with this, Abraham also believed God's promise and so by their combined faith one man's seed grew into a multitude as innumerable as the stars in the sky and the sand by the seashore (12; Gen 15:4-6; 22:17-18).

Their heavenly hope (13-16).

These all died in faith "not having received the promises but having seen them afar off were assured of them" and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth (13). The impact of this hope on their lives:

1. They looked for a home which was not earth based (14-15).
2. They desired a better, that is a heavenly country (16).

By faith Abraham offered up his only begotten son (17-19).

He was willing to obey God (Gen 22:11-14) though the outcome appeared to conflict with God's promise. It was not a rash or unconsidered decision (Gen 22:1-10) but one which countenanced the capacity of God to raise from the dead (19).

The "by faith" actions of son, grandson and great grandson (20-22).

Isaac (20; Gen 27:1-4; 18-40 note 33). He pronounced a blessing on them regarding things to come. No human calculation was involved; he had full confidence that God would accomplish all that He had communicated.

Jacob (21; Gen 48:1-20). A similar point but a strengthened illustration of the previous. Here Israel knowingly blessed the younger son (Ephraim) above his elder brother (14).

Joseph (22; Gen 50:24-26). Having such a strong belief that the unseen events of the future would be as God said, Joseph exacted from his brethren a promise that they would remove his embalmed remains to the promised land.

D. Moses' parents, Moses and the first returning Israelites (11:23-32).

By faith Amram and Jochebed were not afraid to disobey Pharaoh's command (23; Ex 2:1-3).

By faith Moses:

1. Chose to be numbered among the people of God (24-26; Ex 2:11-13). "Moses did not know Christ as we now see Him through the New Testament, but he was fully aware of the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He suffered reproach because he believed that God would send the Messiah. He valued the reward promised through Christ as far greater than all the treasures of Egypt!" (R Harkrider)
2. Abandoned Egypt (27; Ex 2:14-15).
3. Kept the Passover (28; Ex 12). The faith in this instance was the confidence that compliance with the Lord's commands - the taking of the lamb and sprinkling of blood on the door frames - would be the means by which God would preserve the Hebrew firstborn.

By faith Moses and the wilderness generation made safe passage across the Red Sea (29; Ex 14:21-31).

By faith Joshua and the people brought down the walls of Jericho (30; Josh 6:1-20).

It enabled them to disregard the implausibility and dismiss the ridicule that would be naturally associated with the unusual action required by God and trust him that on obedience the desired end would be effected.

By faith Rahab disobeyed her king and sheltered the servants of God (31; Josh 2:1-24; 6:22-25).

The power of faith makes no distinction and is available to all, both harlot and Gentile; it simply responds to a sincere and trusting heart. Rahab hearing of the victorious Israelites confessed, "the LORD your God, he is God in heaven" having demonstrated her sincerity by sheltering His servants (11).

E. More triumphs, too many to innumerate (11:32-40).

A scattering of names and a rushed resumé of feats (32-38).

Emphasis should be given to the enabling element that empowered these people to do what they did - "through faith" (33).

The concluding judgement concerning these men and women of faith (39-40).

These "having obtained a good testimony through faith did not receive the promise" (39; cf. 2 and 6:13-17). How is this statement that those of old did not receive the promise to be reconciled with the affirmation made earlier in the book that Abraham had received the promise and presumably the promise respecting having a numerous posterity (6:15). Perhaps this is to be explained in that the birth of Isaac in such unnatural circumstances was a pledge that the other seed involved in the promise would follow (Gen 21:12; cf. Jn 8:56).

Yet now they have received the promise, but not without us (40).

1. We all have to be made perfect together in Christ. This statement reflects the difference between the old and new order of things. Those who did not initially receive the promise didn't live in the age of fulfilment but in the age of promise. This is reflected in the teaching of the whole epistle. Take special note of 7:11, 19; 9:9; 10:1-2, 14; 12:22-23 (especially the references to perfection).
2. Finally, take note of the way the exhortation at the beginning of Hebrews 12 draws upon the experiences of those listed in ch. 11 to reinforce the point.