

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Hebrews (Chapter 11)

Hebrews 11 (NKJV)

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

4 By faith Abel offered to God 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 dead still speaks.

5 By faith Enoch was taken away 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 pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.

24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him

who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

Continue in *the Faith* (A Prelude to Chapter 11)

It cannot be over stated that the author to the Hebrews recognizes the rich history of Israel. He has mentioned God’s covenant with them, the blessings He has provided them, and the promises of a better and greater covenant. His objective is to have them remember all God has done and to move forward into the promises and blessings of the New Covenant. This is the main theme of the epistle.

Of great interest is the revelation that the Old Covenant administration did not promise the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit (see John 14:15–17), a personal regeneration (the born again experience—see John 3–7), and thus the “eternal security” believers in the Church Age experience (see John 10:22–33 and Ephesians 1:13–14). The Old Covenant God made with the Hebrews did not recognize a once-for-all regenerative act. It did however promise eternal life by faith alone to all believers who trusted the Lord throughout the past dispensations, but now the still (mortal) living Hebrews must transition from the Old Covenant into *the faith* described by faith in Jesus as Messiah.

The Hebrews who desired to continue in *the faith* could not (and cannot) trust in the “Old” administration but must transition into the “New.” This is spelled out distinctly in chapters 6 and 10. For this reason we must remember the closing words of chapter 10 where the author wrote, “*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul*” (Hebrews 10:35–39 NKJV). (See also Matthew 8:12.)

The Scriptures are replete with illustrative and instructional examples of this fact. Take for example the Kingdom parables. (For a sampling, see Matthew 13:1–23, 22:1–14, 25:1–30.)

By Faith

Much has been said and written about Hebrews 11. It has been referred to as “The Hall of Faith,” “The Faith Hall of Fame,” “The Hall of the Faithful,” and more. Whatever you may call it, it gives a beautiful history of faith, the faithful, God’s faithfulness, and how He recorded the lives of those who placed their faith in Him.

The author begins his thesis by saying, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (vs. 1), and immediately connects the results of embracing *the* faith with his definition of faith itself.

I find this important for 3 distinct reasons:

- 1) The author is *not* putting focus on faith as if faith is something mystical and/or magical. In other words, he will not be making faith an end in itself—as though believers are to have faith in faith. Sadly, many do! This error has been the focus of too many contemporary “Faith Healers,” those in the “Word of Faith Movement,” “Positive Confession” advocates, “Mind Over Matter” and “Positive Mental Attitude” (PMA) students, etc. For these, faith is a formula, and if used correctly, one can not only manipulate nature, create miracles, etc. but more so—through “faith” they can manipulate or force God to move on their behalf—as if He is the servant and we are master. This definition of faith is nothing more than “Christianized” witchcraft.
- 2) The author *is* pointing out that biblical faith is the exercise of trust in God through *the* faith He requires of all who look to Him for salvation. This harkens back to our lessons on chapter 10, where I mentioned that “The faith of Abraham is *the* faith. It is faith in God, His word, and His work. And, just as the Jews were never saved by the Law given to Moses, by any religious activity, by any measure of good works, human action, or good intentions, the same is true for all men today. All men, Jew and Gentile alike, are saved by faith—*the* faith.” Moreover, *the* faith embraced by the people of faith promises a complete forgiveness and removal of sin. Thus, “*Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*” (Hebrews 10:17). For this reason, and in connection, the author immediately adds, “*For by it [faith] the elders obtained a good testimony*” (vs. 2). Biblical faith in God is focused in *the* faith “*once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3).

This “faith” is emphasized in verses 8–12 when recounting the story of Abraham and Sarah: “*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore*”. Although a historical reading of the life and times of Abraham (and Sarah) reveal many failures and shortcomings (Genesis 12–25), within the passage we have no remembrance of the wrongs or shortcomings of Abraham, nor of his wife Sarah. We only see a record of their faith, how God enriched their faith, and what the Lord accomplished in and through them. The same is true of all the faithful. “*For by it (faith) the elders obtained a good testimony*” (vs. 2).

Romans 4 records a similar storyline (see Romans 4).

- 3) The author put direct focus on the fact that the people of faith had received promises they did not see or experience during their mortal lifetimes. Although they longed for them, with great anticipation, the date of the coming to fruition of those promises was pushed out beyond what they had hoped. For this reason, he wrote that these *“obtained a good testimony through faith, [but] did not receive the promise”* (vs. 39) and *“[t]hese all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”* (vs. 13).

Too many believers are short-sighted and impatient. Moreover, as a result, some become angry with God, are disappointed, and even profess an abandonment of faith as the result of their unfulfilled expectations. Herein we see the symptoms of what is declared above in point 1—where man is master and God is slave. Therefore, when God does not perform according to our personal plans and desires, does not meet our expectations, etc., we become angry and push Him away. This is not biblical faith! Biblical faith trusts the Lord in spite of circumstances, trials, disappointments, etc.

Fundamentally, this is a primary focus with those in the author’s audience. The Jews had a long history of waiting on God. During their history, there were multiple periods of obedience and disobedience, blessing and trial, trust and unbelief. In this epistle the author is supporting God’s faithfulness and His promise of a coming Messiah.

Faith is

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (vs. 1). Faith is defined herein as complete confidence and trust in the coming to fruition of what was hoped for. With this in mind, I must say again that biblical faith is not the substance of what we imagine, envision, or, from personal interest, hope for. It is the *“substance”* (assurance) of what God has promised and called us to wait for—in hope. (Review point 1 above again if needed.)

Biblical faith is trust in God and His word. For this reason, we reject the idea of “faith in faith” or in the “power of faith” as a mystical power in and of itself. There is no more “power in faith” than there is “power in prayer.” It has been said that “prayer changes things,” but no! God changes things and often does so in answer to prayer! We are called to trust the Lord when we pray. We are called to direct our prayers to Him. In this way, we know that God changes things—not “prayer.”

In the same way we must understand that faith has an object, and that the object of biblical faith is God. For this reason, the author illustratively points out that, *“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible”* (vs. 3). Note that in this application the author says that it is *“by faith we understand.”* This puts focus on the “trust” we have in God’s acts regarding creation, that the things made were not made from visible/material/tangible elements, and that it was *“by the word of God”* that these things came into existence. By faith, we understand what we cannot see or know from human rationalization. Faith is trust in what God has declared.

Faith is genuine belief. In our case we know that it is faith in God and in His word. Saving faith is trust and confidence in all God has done, is doing, and will do to bring about all He has promised. God is faithful and can be trusted. *“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He*

should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19 NKJV).

The Origin of Faith

As the result of our confidence in the creative acts of God (*"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible"* [vs. 3]), we can be assured that faith is a part of the creative work God developed in man. Therefore, we can know with certainty that faith is a gift from God giving every man the capacity to believe. The capability to exercise faith did not spontaneously occur or develop by chance or accident. Biblical faith is not independent of God, cannot exist apart from God, and will not see the fruition of its focus unless it is focused in the truth—as declared by the Lord. Therefore, faith in a lie cannot produce the fruit one may "wish." Thus, men are called to have faith in God and in all He has declared.

The Hall of Faith

The "Hall of Faith" declared in this chapter categorically relates the story of the faithful, the faith men and women placed in the Lord, and the way God used each man and woman. It demonstrates the fruitfulness of trusting the Lord. The author provides a beautiful historical account of many persons who believed God, and how He handled them, viewed them, and led each one.

A beginning Bible student can gain a great deal of insight into Biblical history by reviewing this chapter. Other great primer/reviews can be found in Acts 7:1–50, 13:16–43, etc.

Examples of the Faithful

As we develop the short list of people mentioned herein, we must keep in mind that our study will not rehearse the story of each person in great detail—nor will we provide much commentary. Each person along with their individual stories would require exhaustive character and historical development. For our purposes we will simply reference the point the author herein is developing: the faith each person exercised in the Lord. Moreover, it is of note that none of these listed are named with any remembrance of shortcoming. This must be emphasized for we understand that their faith—like that of Abraham—was accounted to them for righteousness. (Cf. Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3).

Abel

"By faith Abel offered to God 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 dead still speaks" (vs. 4) (cf. Genesis 4:1–12).

It is apparent that Cain was offered the same opportunity as was Abel. However, Cain—trusting in himself—refused to heed the instructions of the Lord. Herein we can see that faith involved obedience. This is not to say that believers always maintain a consistent life of obedience—the Scriptures make this quite clear. However, it is certain that faith is demonstrated through obedience.

Much has been said about the sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel. The storyline records that Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice—a sacrifice of blood: *"Abel...brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering"* (Genesis 4:4 NKJV). But Cain brought an

unacceptable sacrifice to the Lord. He *“brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD”* (Genesis 4:3b NKJV). However, God gave clear instruction to Cain and gave him space to change course and repent—but nonetheless he refused. (See Genesis 4:1–7.)

Many have suggested that the reason Cain’s offering was rejected was because it was not an offering of blood. However, while this may be true, it could be suggested that the account may reflect more.

In the Law there were offerings that involved grain, oil, wine, salt, incense, etc. (see Leviticus 2 and 5:11–13). Therefore, making this the primary reason *may* be overstating. Moreover, we have no record of God giving direct instruction to Adam, Eve, Cain, or Abel concerning sacrifices. This certainly does not suggest there were no instructions given.

This being said, after Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they, having become self-aware and self-conscious through disobedience, not only hid themselves from the Lord but also attempted to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. However, God sacrificed an animal and replaced those coverings with the skins of the animal (Genesis 3:21). Thus, blood was shed to provide a covering for their nakedness. This action may have been accompanied by instructions, but as stated, we have no record of such. Therefore, the fact that God rejected Cain’s offering *may* give support to the theory that more *may* have been involved in Cain’s sin. It could be that disobedience to the Divine instruction was a refusal to trust in God rather than in self. The fact that Cain would not receive correction suggests that he trusted in his own works rather than in the word of God (see Genesis 4:6–7). His rebellion cost him greatly.

Abel—Still Speaks

The author points out that *“he [Abel] being dead still speaks.”* This supports the fact that his genuine faith in the Lord is demonstrated by his behavior—a lesson that should be taken from the passage. The old expression *“Your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks”* (source unknown) is applicable. Therefore, the author to the Hebrews uses this testimony in support of his thesis on the genuineness of Abel’s faith. The same principle is articulated by James in his epistle—also written to the Hebrews (see James 1:1). He does not use his lessons to justify a works-based salvation but rather to show that genuine faith speaks when it is accompanied by works.

Enoch

“By faith Enoch was taken away 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 pleased God” (vs. 5) (cf. Genesis 5:22–24).

It was not recorded in Scripture all the ways in which Enoch pleased the Lord—nor as mentioned above, any shortcomings he most certainly had (he too was a sinner *“for all have sinned”* [Romans 3:23]). However, what we have is the fact that he *“walked with God,”* and as a result, *“the Lord took him.”*

The expression *“God had taken him”* (vs. 5) suggests that the Lord took him from this earthly mortal time continuum and into the dimension of the spirit—the heavenly realm—with God. This being the case puts Enoch into a unique group of only two men to date—he and Elijah (see 2 Kings 2:1–14).

The brief mention of Enoch in Scripture has been suggested as a type of the Rapture: an event that will occur at the end of the Church Age—before the judgments of the 7-year Tribulation. Those who walk with God during the Church Age—by faith—will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Those who are alive at the Rapture will not see death—as was the case with Enoch (see 1 Thessalonians 4:15–18).

A Brief Comment

The author inserted a parenthetical comment following his discussions concerning Abel and Enoch. This was likely done in order to keep the reader focused on faith—for faith is that which makes one pleasing to the Lord. Behavior was mentioned with Abel and Enoch, but we must remember that their behavior was manifested by genuine faith. Behavior alone is not what the Lord is looking for—it is faith that is pleasing to God. For *“without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (vs. 6).

The Bible is replete with the words and works of men. However, words and works are not salvific, nor do they of necessity suggest unbelief. Consider what the Lord said when addressing those on the “Mount of Beatitudes.” He said, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* (Matthew 7:21–23 NKJV). The “will of the Father” Jesus was referring to was genuine faith—faith in Jesus. All the profession and all the “action” was not what God was looking for. He was looking for an abandonment of faith in self, and a confident faith in Jesus.

This passage (often misunderstood and misapplied) did not address the born again believer. In fact, it was addressed to a people group assembled on the mountain side overlooking the Sea of Galilee before the end of the Old Covenant dispensation. At that time, no one had yet to experience being “born again.” Therefore, we cannot apply it to the Church Age believer. It, like the similar passage in Luke, was Jewish in nature, was communicated during the latter years of the Old Covenant dispensation, and was a call to saving faith in Jesus alone.

Consider the passage from Luke’s gospel:

“And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, ‘Lord, are there few who are saved?’ And He said to them, ‘Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’ then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’” But He will say, “I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.” There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last’” (Luke 13:22–30 NKJV).

The Kingdom referred to herein is the Messianic Kingdom; the fact that those outside would *“see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and [they themselves] thrust out”* is an indictment against unbelief and a call to genuine saving faith. For *“without faith it is*

impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (vs. 6). Similarly, and in forward focus, Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to see the Kingdom he must be born again (see all of John 3:1–21). This "born again" experience was something man would experience by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus the Messiah alone. The then forward-pointing statement regarding regeneration and the sealing of the Holy Spirit had not yet been experienced by men, but it would be in the then soon to come Church Age—as inaugurated and demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2). Therefore, those who suggest this applies to Church Age believers and employ the passages to indicate that "born again" believers can "lose their salvation" fail in their hermeneutic.

Paul's words to the Ephesians underscored and put finality to the subject when he said, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"* (Ephesians 2:8–9 NKJV). Behavior was not the issue and the author wanted to underscore this fact. The issue was and is faith. For *"without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"* (vs. 6).

Diligently Seek Him

We have already addressed (in great detail) that the Hebrews were being called to move from the Old Covenant to the New and would therefore need to make that transition by continuing in *the* faith once delivered to the saints. Therefore, the injunction to *"diligently seek Him"* (vs. 6) reinforced and coupled together all said earlier in the letter. Moreover, those who *"diligently seek Him"* would experience the "reward" promised to the people of faith—in *the* faith being presented.

Noah

"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (vs. 7) (cf. Genesis 6–8).

Continuing his illustrative exhortation, the author makes mention of the faith of Noah and the manifestations of his faith in action. Noah heard from God, believed God concerning things he had never seen (some believe that this refers to the absence of rain upon the earth until the flood. Others suggest that it may refer to the global flood caused by unprecedented rain, etc. See Genesis 2:4–6; 7:4), was moved with *"godly fear,"* acted upon his faith—by "preparing the ark," and proclaimed the righteousness of God. His actions contrasted the unbelief of those who mocked him during the lengthy preaching/building period (see 2 Peter 2:5).

Please note that all the "work" Noah did *"condemned the world"* but was not the method by which he was justified, made righteous, etc. *"By faith Noah...became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith"* (vs. 7 abbreviated). The imputed righteousness was *"according to faith,"* not works.

Abraham

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same

promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (vss. 8–10) (cf. Genesis 12–25:11).

Abraham experienced the call of God at the age of 75 (Genesis 12:1–4). At that time, God began to communicate His promise to him. Closely thereafter, Abraham and Sarah journeyed to Canaan for a brief period, then, as the result of famine in the land, they sojourned to Egypt for an estimated space of about 10 years. Following their return God once again confirmed His promise to Abraham by an unconditional, one-sided covenant (Genesis 13:14–16; 15:1–7). Shortly thereafter, Sarah encouraged Abraham to take her handmaiden (Hagar) in order to help fulfill the promises of God (see Genesis 16). This was a big mistake. The result was the birth of a son (by Hagar) named Ishmael. However, God had promised Abraham *and Sarah* a son—a son of promise. Nonetheless, Abraham (through the flesh) attempted to assist God in the fulfillment of that promise. This, among other things, was what Abraham learned *“according to the flesh”* (Romans 4:1)—namely that God did not need his help and that the promises and blessings of God would come through faith—not by works.

Paul the Apostle knew that his readers would understand the lessons learned and thus used it to illustrate the fact that faith in the promises of God was what God desired—not the work of the flesh (see Romans 4:1).

Abraham learned that he would be *“justified by faith”* and thus *“believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness.”* (See Genesis 15:6, and references in Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6, James 2:23).

Even though one might correctly suggest that Abraham (and Sarah) made many mistakes (as recorded in history), God nonetheless justified Abraham by faith alone—not holding (or in this case recording) his trespasses against him.

When we talk about justification by faith, and give focus to the word “justification” through the definition, “just-if-I’d” never sinned, we tend to think that God forgives our sins but remembers them nonetheless. In doing this, we get the Gospel wrong! God did say, *“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more”* (Hebrews 10:17 NKJV). This blessing is part of the New Covenant promised to Israel and enjoyed by all people of *the* faith.

Paul, when reciting David, gave special attention to this when he wrote, *“blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin”* (Romans 4:8 NKJV). As is true in Romans 4, this hidden gem is recorded here in Hebrews 11.

Even as Paul provided no mention of Abraham’s lapses, neither does the author to the Hebrews. Abraham lied about his wife, required his wife to lie, and demonstrated a lapse in faith when allowing his wife to lead him toward trust in the flesh and when following through with her advice. Abraham clearly was not a man who lived in “unwavering faith.” However, the way the Holy Spirit inspired Paul and the author to the Hebrews to report the history makes no mention of his errors. We simply read, *“By faith Abraham obeyed”* (vs. 8.) Paul went as far as to say, *“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith”* (vs. 20). The same is true for you and me. History can faithfully tell the story of our lives and of all our shortcomings. However, God remembers our sin no more. *“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin”* (Romans 4:7–8).

Like Abraham, the Hebrews were called upon to “obey” the Lord and leave the so-called comforts of their “Old home” found under the Law. By faith they would now be required to embrace their “New home” found in the promised blessings of the New Covenant. Moreover, faith in Jesus was then and now required in order to inherit the salvation promised—and the future blessings of *“the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (vs. 10).

Sarah

“By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore” (vss. 11–12).

Like Abraham, Sarah *“received strength to conceive seed”* and *“judged Him faithful who had promised”* (vs. 11). I would suggest that when Sarah *“received strength to conceive”* she experienced the physical restorative miracle required—allowing her body to produce the egg/ovum needed to *“conceive seed”* and thus become pregnant. Moreover, the receiving of strength may have also been the enhancing of her faith. Early on she did have doubt. Her lack of faith was manifested by her suggestion to engage Hagar in the attempted fulfillment of the promise (as mentioned above—Genesis 16:1–4). Moreover, she was said to have laughed when hearing the promise (see Genesis 18:1–15). However, inasmuch as we have no directly stated Old Testament record of Sarah exercising personal or rising faith, here we have the inspired author recount to us what was/is unrecorded in the Genesis account. He simply says, *“Sarah received strength to conceive seed”* and *“judged Him faithful who had promised.”* Personally, I love this insight. There are things going on in people around us that we cannot see or perceive with our natural senses. God is at work even when we cannot see it.

God, in His faithfulness, strengthened the faith of both Abraham and Sarah and fulfilled His promise to them. For *“from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore”* (vs. 12) (cf. Genesis 15:1–6).

The author used this illustration in order to encourage the Hebrews who needed strength in faith—faith to continue in *the* faith and believe the Lord as they moved forward in all He had promised them. The Jews who had yet to trust Jesus their Messiah for salvation were themselves *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1,5) and would therefore require the regeneration of the Spirit promised in the new birth. The same applies to all men. We are hopelessly “lost,” “dead,” “under wrath” until we trust Jesus for salvation. It is the Lord Himself who gives life to the dead—it is Him alone. Even as Abraham and Sarah were fully incapable of producing an heir (a new life) in their old age, we are fully incapable of experiencing the new life needed and provided only in and by the Lord. The new life we all need (and as believers experience) is the work of God and God alone.

Persevering Faith—Not of this World, Other Worldly

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (vss. 13–16).

“These all died in faith” provides us a glorious and complimentary example. *“These”* referred to herein include Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah—as the text demands. However, by the time this letter was written, it would include Isaac, Jacob, the sons of Israel, Moses, David, and many other Hebrews who had long looked for the fulfillment of promises made them. Through all they endured, they did not grow weary in well doing. They trusted the Lord and continued believing in spite of the fact that they had spent a lifetime looking for what they rightly believed God would provide. As a result, *“by faith”* these believers entered into glory without seeing the object of their faith come to its fruition and fullness.

The reference to a homeland pointed to the eternal rather than the temporal. This is understood by the comment that they *“confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”* (vs. 13). It is no exaggeration to also suggest that the future fully obtained and occupied Promised Land may have been in view. Therefore, the reference to a heavenly country could properly refer to both the Promised Land and to the eternal state wherein the believer will forever be with the Lord. Abraham had come out of Ur of the Chaldeans and was directed by the Lord throughout his sojourn. Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and the others, like Abraham, looked forward to the *“heavenly country”* in their future—rather than looking back to those things behind.

Ultimately, all of the Hebrews needed to remember that those who had *“died in faith”* were not privileged to see the birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus their Messiah. However, those reading this letter did—and would do well to see the faith of their predecessors as an example of patience and faithfulness during trial and protracted anticipation of what God has promised. Their need for continuing faith, in *the* faith, would be richly rewarded should they continue in the promises given.

For the contemporary Hebrews, the full reception and realization of the Promised Land, the Kingly reign of Jesus, the complete restoration of Israel, and the removal of all those things contained in the curse (brought about by judgment for sin) would indeed be theirs should they continue in the faith delivered to the Hebrew men and women of old.

Those who *“died in faith”* having seen all promised afar off will nonetheless see all God promised. Although graduated from this temporal life into the eternal, they will indeed see (in their glorified bodies) all they anticipated while patiently enduring their sojourn in the temporal.

God is never ashamed of the people of *the* faith. He glories in His work in them and is not *“ashamed to be called their God.”* However, those Hebrews who refuse(d) to believe and fall away (see again the lessons on chapter 6) cannot please Him. Recall that all *“must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Hebrews 11:6b).

Strange Circumstances

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense” (cf. Genesis 22:1–18).

As another example of faith, the author shows how God challenged Abraham through a test of loyalty and human reason. By this point Abraham had experienced growing faith and trust in the Lord. He had seen the mighty hand of God at work.

In his old age Abraham was blessed with the promised son (Isaac) and was told that through Isaac his *“seed shall be called”* (vs. 18) (cf. Genesis 21:12 and Romans 9:7). However, several years later God tested (did not tempt) Abraham—proving that Abraham had not made his son Isaac an idol in his life or fail to see that the fulfillment of the promise—through Isaac—would require Isaac himself to have a son and therefore bring to fruition the greater promise associated with the miraculous birth of Isaac himself.

This test would require more than what the natural man could accept—for Abraham would not only have to be willing to give up his son by sacrifice, he would also need to believe that God would raise him up from the dead, *“concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense”* (vs. 19). Therefore, the test would require trust superseding human reason—the kind of faith, in *the faith*, the Hebrews would need to move forward through the dispensation change being communicated.

This insight concerning Abraham’s faith in the resurrection is without notation in the Old Testament. However, here the author stated that Abraham *“conclude[d] that God was able to raise [Isaac] up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense”* (vs. 19). This unmentioned but important truth is omitted in the Genesis record but is now revealed in the letter to the Hebrews.

Types and Shadows

It is of note that the circumstances of this test also served as a foreshadowing type of the future sacrifice of Jesus—the only begotten Son of God. This is highlighted by the expression given here in Hebrews where the author stated, *“his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called’”* (vs. 18).

It is also of note that (although an argument from silence) Isaac was submissive, obedient, and trusting when willingly surrendering to the preparation of himself for the then potential sacrifice. It likewise foreshadows the willingness of Jesus as a willing sacrifice Himself—on behalf of the sins of the whole world—in surrender to the will of the Father (see Matthew 16:36–46).

Isaac’s birth symbolized life from the dead (by regeneration of Sarah’s dead womb—a type of spiritual regeneration), the willing sacrifice of the “only begotten” son/Son, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead as the only begotten Son of God, and the future resurrection of every believer *in* Jesus—of the Church Age saints, the Old Testament saints, the Tribulation saints, and climactically the nation and people of Israel at the climax of the Tribulation in preparation for the coming Kingdom Age.

Future Faith

The author moves forward in this hall of *the faith* by mentioning the faith of Isaac saying that he *“blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come”* (vs. 20). The occasion in view is what we have recorded in Genesis 27:1–40. This occasion is the event wherein Rebecca assisted Jacob in deceiving his father Isaac over the birthright blessing.

Inasmuch as this event troubles many, it was there that we see that the valuation of the birthright was in high view, thus inspiring the Lord to declare, *“Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated”* (see Romans 9:10–13).

The blessing given Jacob reads, *“Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!”* (Genesis 27:28–29 NKJV), and even still to Esau we read, *“Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: ‘Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck”* (Genesis 27:39–40 NKJV).

These two separate blessings were prophetic in nature and looked ahead to what God would bring to pass. For Jacob it would be the development of the people of Israel and for Esau the Edomites.

On Joseph’s Sons: Ephraim and Manasseh

Continuing thoughts include the blessings of Jacob upon the sons of Joseph. *“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff”* (vs. 21). (See Genesis 48).

The blessing though contrary to the natural custom placed a double portion on Joseph by extension through his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh—and then in reverse order. Manasseh was the older and Ephraim the younger. However, Jacob was in effect prophetically exercising faith in the foreknown will of God, wherein God would exalt Ephraim to a greater role in future days. (See the Book of Joshua for an extensive study if desired.)

As you may recall, this is not the first time the younger was exalted above the older. Once again this points to the sovereign work of God, His purpose and calling, and His work according to the Divine prerogative—rather than through the natural or logical reasoning of man.

The point herein was faith in the divine plan of God: the future blessings He had predetermined for the Hebrews—and thus, the rest of the world. For God had promised Abraham, and thus by extension—Isaac, Jacob, and all the children of Israel, *“I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* (Genesis 12:3 NKJV).

On Joseph’s Bones

Still in Egypt and looking forward in faith to the fulfillment of the promises God had made concerning the land of promise—and its all-inclusive associated blessings—we also read that, *“By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones”* (vs. 22). (See Genesis 50:22–26)

Like Jacob, Joseph died in Egypt, but nonetheless believed the word of God and exercised faith in the future deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt. He believed they would indeed inherit the land of promise, and thus *“made mention of the departure of the children of Israel”* giving *“instructions concerning his bones”* which he sought to have buried in the promised land (see Joshua 24:32). This again served as a reminder to the Hebrews of the faith they had enjoyed and the future promise earlier given that has now come to fruition.

Faith Amidst Trial

At this point I need to mention the fact that Satan knew of the promised blessings given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He knew of the elaborations and insights given through prophets, and therefore, much of what God intended for the Children of Israel. Satan has from the inception of the Abrahamic Covenant—with its all-inclusive blessings—resisted and worked to destroy Israel, and thus discredit the Lord by attempting to thwart the plans of God. This would include the development of the people, their deliverance from Egypt, entry into and possession of the Promised Land, ultimately the birth of the Messiah, and thus the redemption promised through Him—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. (Revelation 12 gives a prophetic broad spectrum overview of great interest.)

The persecution of the Children of Israel late in their Egyptian bondage is just one of many illustrations of the Satanic conspiracy. The Children of Israel had grown in number and had become a threat to the then reigning Pharaoh. He desired to have all the male children born destroyed and thus we read of the faith of Moses' mother (and sister) who hid him from the wrath of the Pharaoh (a type of Satan). (There is much to cover herein and a detailed reading of Exodus 1–2:10 is in order.)

The provisions and protections of God are in view as the author to the Hebrews segued to this illustration of the faith: *“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command”* (vs. 23). A similar event occurred in Israel after the birth of Jesus (see Matthew 2).

From here the author moves to the trials and difficulties Moses chose to endure rather than “enjoy” the pleasures of Egypt (a type of the world and its bondage). He wrote, *“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned”* (vss. 24–29). (For detail please read Exodus 2:11–15:21)

It is certain that the author had the affliction these Hebrews were experiencing (and would experience) as the result of their continuation in *“the faith”* they were then and are now called to. If and when they moved from the dispensational attributes and systems of the Old Covenant to the New, they would (and were) experience persecution. (This was addressed early on in our study.) Therefore, these Hebrews were in need of a reflective lesson on what Moses experienced—as they too would need to *“choos[e] rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of [the] sin”* (vs. 25 modified) of rejecting Jesus as Messiah—and thus fail to appropriate all God intended for them in the New Covenant. They too were called to esteem *“the reproach of Christ greater riches than [any or all] treasures”* and look *“to the reward”* (vs. 26 modified). After all, the Passover the Hebrews celebrated year by year upon and following their deliverance from Egypt had come to fruition in the once for all sacrifice of Jesus the Lamb of God—Who was crucified on the exact date of Passover the year of his death, burial, and resurrection. Go figure, it was the fulfillment of the type after all! In fact, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus was the fulfillment of the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits. Glorious!

Promised Victory Remembered

If the above was not enough, the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to add even more. If the Hebrews were going to suffer for the name of Jesus, they should also be reminded that victory awaits the obedient. For this reason he mentioned Jericho: *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days”* (vs. 30) (see Joshua 6 for detail). Moreover, as the New Covenant would be a blessing to the Gentiles also (see Romans 11 for some insight), the mention of Rahab was in order: *“By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace”* (vs. 31).

Rahab exercised faith (also manifested by her actions) and thus did not perish with the unbelieving residents of Jericho. She had seen the acts of God, received the spies, hid them, helped them escape the city, and tied a symbolic scarlet cord in the window of her house no doubt signifying (as a symbol of her faith) the blood of redemption. (See Joshua 2 for detail.)

The Hebrews who were thus believers would be trusting the word God had given them from the times of Abraham and continuing, would endure hardship as believers in Jesus the Messiah, were recognizing the future promised blessings still to come, and be assured of the full future blessing promised the Jews (and the rest of the believing world) at the coming to fruition of the Kingdom Age—a literal, future, physical Kingdom here on earth—where Jesus will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And What More Shall I Say?

I find the expression concerning an abbreviated but climaxing list of such a personal nature. It seems the Lord inspired the author to conclude this way as he had so exhaustively listed numbers of persons and circumstances regarding the faith—and the people of faith—in support of his point: believe, move forward, trust the Lord, this was the plan all along, don’t shrink back, believe!

The amusing aspect of the statement “what more shall I say?” just seems so right. As if he needed to drive the point home any further. But no, he still must list Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets all of whom he said, *“through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens”* (vs. 33–34). Then he adds, *“Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, [and] tormented”* (vs. 35–37). Wow, what a listing! These are the people of God—the people of faith—the faith. These show the trials of faith. This is the faith of victories! This list shows the perseverance of genuine faith and the rewards granted those who (by the granted empowering grace of God) believed to the saving of their souls. It declares deliverance from trial, and at times the grace to endure hardship, sufferings, and trial otherwise thought impossible—in spite of temporal deliverance. And why? To encourage the Hebrews to endure, press on, trust and believe the Gospel! Moreover, to provide the same encouragement to all of us!

Admittedly, I am challenged with handling the text the way this author does—with brevity. However, it must be noted that this was the divine plan as the text was inspired. Nonetheless, I am tempted to write about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. I want to tell the stories related to those *“Women [who] received their dead raised to life again.”* And the *“Others [who] were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.”* And,

“Still others [who] had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.” I want to think about and write about those who were *“stoned, ...sawn in two, ...tempted, ...slain with the sword.”* And finally, about the man who must be in the mind of the author (namely John the Baptist) who like other prophets, *“wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, [and] tormented”* (vs. 35–37), and *“wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth”* (vs. 38b). But no! I mustn’t. Otherwise I would need to write volumes! Therefore, I leave you to read your bibles and do some homework on your own. Just know this: The Lord reminded the Hebrews concerning the value of faith in God—knowing that He is *“a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (vs. 6), trust Him, obey Him, and receive of Him! Moreover, the necessity of faith in *“the faith once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3). It is a needed reminder to us all!

Of Whom the World Was Not Worthy!

The expression *“of whom the world was not worthy”* (vs. 38a) provides us an opportunity to reflect on several things.

First of all, we should consider the unworthiness of all mankind in relationship to the Lord of our faith, *the faith*, who willingly laid down His life for such sinners as you and me. For we who deserve only eternal damnation have been given an undeserved everlasting hope: the promise of everlasting life in the presence of the only true and living God.

Secondly, we should consider the unworthiness of unbelieving man in relationship to the faith the men and women named above (along with you and me) have embraced. For they (along with you and me) who believe, represent the Gospel of our Lord, and thus provide representation of the hope of salvation to those who were otherwise enabled to repent of unbelief and turn to God in faith—but nonetheless failed to do so.

Thirdly, we should consider the unworthiness of those unbelievers who knowingly or unknowingly were blessed with the truth as presented by those referenced above, and moreover shared in the common blessing God provided them through the presence of the people of God in the world. For whether known or not, unbelievers are benefited by the presence of believers in this world. In fact, of great revelation to many believers, unbelievers in the rebellion will rejoice in the believers’ absence at the Rapture and do rejoice in the demise of believers today. Thus the persecution of the church. This alone suggests an unworthiness of the presence of believers, who themselves—by the power and presence of God—provide the undeserving world, and thus, document the authoritative nature of the comment, *“of whom the world was not worthy”* (vs. 38a).

On a more personal level the author shows that this world is so blessed by the persons and work of the Lord in the people of faith that he names them in this semi-exhaustive listing. We could do something of the same. I am sure we can each think of individuals who have influenced us—and others in this world—who have so impacted us, and those around us, that they merit the same category or listing in our own personal story. The implications are sobering and should cause us all to celebrate in thankfulness!

The Long Wait

In the final comments of this chapter, the author points to the fact that these men and women in *“The Hall of Faith”* were those who looked forward in anticipation to the coming of the Messiah and

the coming to fruition of His Kingdom. The final person in the listing (as mentioned above) was likely John the Baptist, of whom Jesus said two very important things:

- 1) *“The law and the prophets were until John”* (Luke 16:16a NKJV).
- 2) *“I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he”* (Luke 7:28 NKJV).

Both of these statements indicate that like all before him, John the Baptist was looking forward in anticipation to the coming to fruition of all he (and they) had longed for in the Messiah: His coming and His Kingdom. However, *“...all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us”* (vss. 39–40).

John himself said something of interest too: *“John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him’ ”* (John 3:27–36 NKJV).

In all of this John recognized at least 8 things:

- 1) That God is sovereign in the affairs, times, and privileges of man.
- 2) That John knew that he was sent as a forerunner to Jesus the Messiah and was called to introduce him to Israel (and the rest of the world).
- 3) That John recognized (at least to some degree) that he was a friend of the bridegroom (Jesus) but not a part of the bride. How much he knew herein is uncertain. However, we know that the Church is the bride of Christ and that the Church is being developed now in the Church Age. John was (as mentioned above) the last of the Old Covenant prophets—a friend of the bridegroom—not the bride.
- 4) That Jesus was above all—*“sent from heaven”*—and not to be thought of as just another prophet.
- 5) That those who receive His testimony has certified that God is true.
- 6) That Jesus is the Son of God.
- 7) That Jesus has been given all authority.
- 8) And finally, that *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”*

These things must be understood!

The people of faith, who throughout the Old Testament dispensations lived by faith, in *the faith*, are those who *“having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise”* (vs. 39). *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”* (Hebrews

11:13 NKJV). They looked forward by faith, with anticipation, toward the coming to fruition of all God had promised, and therefore obtained a good testimony. This fact was used to inspire the then living Hebrews who were called to move forward from the Old Covenant and into the New—as earlier prophesied—and not to look or shrink back in unbelief. The same is true for every Jew today. They must all move forward *in the faith* and trust Jesus as Messiah.

Not Perfected Without Us

The final thought here in Chapter 11 tells us that God did not perfect the Jews in the Old Covenant but intended that they should wait and be perfected with us. *“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect”* (Hebrews 10:1 NKJV). And therefore, *“God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us”* (vs. 40) planned for a future time when all of this would come to its fullness and the prophetic plan would be fulfilled. His plan pointed toward the New Covenant which has been inaugurated (now in the Church Age) but will come to its fullest fruition in the Kingdom Age.

When That Which is Perfect Has Come

There is a positional sense in which the people of faith have been perfected in the Lord. But we now see that *“by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14 NKJV). However, with that said, there is nonetheless a practical sense in which the fullness of perfection will be climactically realized by every believer. This will come in phases.

For the Believer in the Church Age the final perfection will occur at the Rapture. *“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.*

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:42–58 NKJV). *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 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. 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. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in*

the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:14–18 NKJV).

For the saints from the Old Testament dispensations, coupled together with the Tribulation saints, that moment will occur at the time of the Second Coming of Jesus—when He comes to rescue Israel and establish His earthly literal physical Kingdom upon the earth.

Of the Tribulation saints we read, *“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead [these are all unbelievers] did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years”* (Revelation 20:4–6 NKJV).

From the Old Testament dispensations there will likewise be a resurrection from the dead. Of these we read, (speaking of the Tribulation) *“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time [following the seven-year Tribulation] your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, [and then after the thousand-year physical literal earthly reign of Jesus known as the Kingdom Age—see Revelation 20:1–3, 5a, 11–15] some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever”* (Daniel 12:1–3 NKJV).

In Ezekiel we read, *“Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,” says the LORD’ ”* (Ezekiel 37:12–14 NKJV).

And finally, in Matthew we read, *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Matthew 24:29–31 NKJV).

Oh what glorious things await the people of God—the people of faith, the people of the faith, who know that *“without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV).

Questions:

True or False: The Old Covenant God made with the Hebrews did not recognize a once-for-all regenerative act.

True or False: Faith is a formula, and if used correctly, one can not only manipulate nature, create miracles, etc. but more so—through “faith” they can manipulate or force God to move on their behalf.

True or False: Many believers are short-sighted and impatient. Moreover, as a result, some become angry with God, are disappointed, and even profess an abandonment of faith as the result of their unfulfilled expectations.

True or False: Biblical faith is imagining what I want from God and being able to secure it.

True or False: We can know with certainty that faith is a gift from God giving every man the capacity to believe. The capability to exercise faith did not spontaneously occur or develop by chance or accident. Biblical faith is not independent of God, cannot exist apart from God, and will not see the fruition of its focus unless it is focused in the truth—as declared by the Lord.

True or False: It is of note that none of those listed in Hebrews 11 are named with any remembrance of shortcoming. This must be emphasized for we understand that their faith—like that of Abraham—was accounted to them for righteousness.

True or False: Those who had “*died in faith*” were not privileged to see the birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus their Messiah. However, those reading this letter did—and would do well to see the faith of their predecessors as an example of patience and faithfulness during trial and protracted anticipation of what God has promised.

True or False: Satan has from the inception of the Abrahamic Covenant—with its all-inclusive blessings—resisted and worked to destroy Israel, and thus discredit the Lord by attempting to thwart the plans of God.

True or False: Believers will never actually be perfect.

True or False: “*Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*” (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV).

Notes: