

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Part IV

STUDY NUMBER NINETEEN - HEBREWS 11:1-22

The wonderful thing about studying the book of Hebrews is that the book of Hebrews is a book that magnifies the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As you begin in chapter 1 you are meeting people who want to leave Christianity for Judaism. The reason they do is many of them have lost their homes, they have been persecuted, they have had difficulty ever since they made their confession of faith.

So what they are saying in essence is, "I would like to go back under Judaism it's lot more comfortable, I am going to be accepted by my family and everything is going to be a whole lot easier.

The writer to the book of Hebrews, with Holy passion, wants them to understand there are serious consequences to that.

You can't go back and live under Judaism without very, very serious things happening.

And one of those things is, you are trying to destroy a relationship that is permanent. In other words

THERE ARE NO REWIND BUTTONS ON THE VCR OF LIFE

Although we would like it to be that way.

You can't all of the sudden destroy a relationship as though it never existed.

And they are thinking of going back under Judaism and the writer makes this powerful plea.

We have learned in this study the fact that each of us must have someone represent us before God.

We cannot expect that on our own we would be accepted in God's presence.

Now the Aaronic priesthood was set up for that purpose: to represent the people before God.

But when Christ died upon the cross and the veil was ripped from top to bottom the Aaronic priesthood was nullified and finished.

Now there is a new priest and this new priest is the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is one God and one mediator. 1 Timothy 2:5.

And so we have a new:

PRIEST,

COVENANT, and

SACRIFICE

and that's Hebrews 7:8, 9.

When you arrive at Hebrews Chapter 10

the author basically says,

“folks hang in there.

Don't take the easy way out.

Keep trusting God and be obedient to His word.”

Now he's given all these wonderful statements.

Christ is:

SUPERIOR TO ANGELS

Christ is:

SUPERIOR TO MOSES

Christ is:

SUPERIOR TO THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

Christ is:

**THE INSTITUTION OF A NEW SACRIFICE,
A NEW PRIESTHOOD, A NEW COVENANT**

**Now that's wonderful isn't it?
That's awesome truth because it focuses
on the person of Christ.**

When you get to Hebrews 11 it gets so great, why?

**Because for the first time we are changing from
principles to people.**

**It's going from living by faith and
seeing not only belief, but you are seeing biography.**

**The thing that would thrill you today is to be able
to understand that if you are having a rough time
there are people before you who have had a rough time
and have negotiated life just like you have and
they've done it successfully.**

**It brings you great inspiration and it gives you
the ability to persevere and press on
when you hear that doesn't it?**

I mean it just thrills us when we hear these stories.

Well that's what the writer is getting ready to do.

**He says, “You all are having it rough,
you are getting ready to quit,
you are discouraged.**

You want to leave Christ and go back to Judaism.

**Let me tell you something,
your name will never be in the hall of faith
if you don’t stay in there and keep going.”**

Hebrews 11 is what we call the great Hall of Faith.

**It is the story of folks who moved forward and
nothing stopped them.**

**Now when we look at the first three verses
of Hebrews 11 we are talking about what faith does,
we are not talking about what faith is.**

**How will you see faith?
When you see it manifested,
what are its characteristics?
What does it do?**

**You see the big thing today, that’s going to bless you
and why Hebrews 11 is so great is because
it’s people who are coming up alongside of you and
all they had was, the promises of God but they made it.**

And that brings inspiration.

**Now faith without works is dead,
when faith is alive it will manifest itself
in certain ways.**

**The way this is divided today,
we will look at the first three verses,
and it tells us what faith does, and then
we are going to see eight biographies.**

**v. 1 Now faith is the realization of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.**

**There are two things that you can say when you
see faith. The person who is exercising faith has:**

1. “THE REALIZATION OF THINGS HOPE FOR”

and

2. “THE CONVICTION OF THINGS NOT SEEN.”

**In fact it is so real that he is already realizing
what he hopes for which is life after death –
eternal salvation through coming to know
the person of Christ.**

**It’s “the realization of things hoped for” but it’s
“the conviction of things not seen.”**

**It is knowing in your heart of hearts
there is an unseen world.**

And knowing in your heart of hearts that the invisible is real and it is only the Spirit of God moving in our hearts that causes us to become aware of that.

1 Corinthians 2:9

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.

So it's the conviction of things not seen.

Now a person who is not a Christian has a problem with that.

1 Corinthians 2:14

That the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: that they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

So he is limited.

Now if we take verse 1 then and it says, "faith is the realization of things hoped for" and "the conviction of things not seen" we can say what it believes is true and what it expects will come about.

**Hope looks forward with certainty
founded on conviction.**

Solid conviction based on God's word.

**Somebody said, "Faith makes the future present and
the invisible seen."**

**Somebody said,
"We see the invisible,
hear the inaudible,
touch the intangible, and
do the impossible!"**

That's people who have learned to walk by faith.

**Are you aware of the unseen and the
reality of the unseen?**

1 Peter 1:8

**And though you have not seen Him, you love Him,
and though you do not see Him now, but believe in
Him, you greatly rejoice with joy unspeakable and
full of glory.**

**You can't see Him but you can know Him and the
reality of His presence in your life is something very,
very beautiful.**

That's what faith does.

**That's when you see faith, it is like that.
Now can I say a few things about what faith isn't?**

**Faith is NOT positive thinking.
Some people equate faith to positive thinking.
That is not faith.**

**Faith is NOT a hunch.
I have a hunch this might be okay so I'm going to
put some faith in that.**

**Faith is NOT hoping for the best.
Faith is not just sitting here just hoping that it's really
going work and everything is going to be fine.**

**And faith is NOT a feeling of optimism.
In other words I know if I just keep being optimistic,
everything is going to turn out wonderful and so we
equate faith to optimism.**

Can I share what faith really is?

**FAITH IS EXERCISED WHEN WE ARE PERSEVERING
AND HANGING ON TO THE PROMISES
WHEN THERE IS NO EVIDENCES
OF GOD'S INTERVENTION
IN OUR LIFE AND CIRCUMSTANCES.**

**You see, the greatest demonstration of faith
is not when everything is going great for you.**

**The greatest demonstration of faith
is your hanging on to the promises when God
has some greater purpose that you don't understand.**

**And you're having a tremendous testimony
to the authenticity of the promises of God
by the fact that you're hanging on to them by faith.**

**Every one of these characters in Hebrews 11
are going to show that to you in bold relief today,
of how beautiful faith is demonstrated in their lives.**

v. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

**They were men who walked with God and
they trusted Him.**

Remember Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

**Here they are confronted with the fiery furnace,
listen to them talk with faith talk?**

**They said as they came before King Nebuchadnezzar,
"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace,
the God we serve is able to save us from it, and
he will rescue us from your hand, O king.
[But get this.] But even if he does not, we want you to
know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or
worship the image of gold you have set up."**

You see that's leaving God with the option of His sovereign purpose whether to say yea or nay to what we are asking of Him.

And it's faith in the promises knowing that God has some purpose that's greater than that if He denies the fulfillment of our desire or a request.

And so God is going to come through whether or not it's in the fiery furnace.

To my way of thinking it is when God does not come through for you because of some different program or greater purpose involved, that we have a true picture of faith.

That we would go on continuing to believe in God and His goodness and His grace to get us through whatever circumstances He has designed for our individual lives.

Now that's Biblical, New Testament faith.

v. 3 By faith we are understanding that the worlds have been prepared by the word of God, so that which we are seeing has not come into being out of things which are visible.

What does creation do to you?

**Creation allows you to praise the creator.
You see the greatness of God in everything
around you in creation.**

**We are fascinated by the greatness of this world and
all that God has put together.**

**I heard the cutest story the other day. There was an
orangutan in the zoo and the zookeeper came by and in
his hand he had a Bible and in his other hand he had
Darwin. Zookeeper said can you understand what you
are reading? The orangutan said well, I'm a little
confused. This book says I'm my brothers keeper and
this one says I'm my keepers brother.**

**You realize it does get kind of confusing and
messed up out there sometimes when you try to
put all that stuff together.**

**The nearest star in our very average galaxy, Alpha
Centauri, is 25,000,000 miles away. Our glorious sun
that fills our sky and lights our days is but a mere
speck in our galaxy. The huge star Betelgeuse is
27,000,000 times larger than our sun. It would take
fourteen 25,000,000-mile trips to get around that one
star. All that, and yet our galaxy is only one of a
hundred thousand million other galaxies. All the
universe ought to do is cause you to praise God.**

You have evidences all around you, of the hand of God in putting this marvelous thing together.

So faith sees creation as evidence of the existence of God and the promises which he makes, which we hang on to in the midst of life's adversities.

Isn't that wonderful?

Now from verse 4 down to 22 we are going to see 8 biographies.

They are going to be quick little snapshots but they are going to teach us a whole lot about faith.

So we move from principles to people, from belief to biography.

These 8 people we are going to look at, I call them the BF's and the AF's.

That's before the flood and after the flood.

You have 3 before and 5 after in the stories.

Each of them are there for a special reason and they have a message that's powerful for us to get a hold of.

v. 4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still is speaking.

The first guy that we have is the younger son of Adam and Eve.

They have Cain and then they have Abel.

The time comes for worship and the two boys come with different sacrifices.

God made it clear what he wanted but Cain didn't pay attention.

He thought God would be very appreciative of the sacrifices of the toil of his own labor so he brings the fruit of the ground.

And Abel brings the sacrifice.

Then Cain gets ticked because his sacrifice is rejected.

Listen to what the Lord says in Genesis 4.

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

You must do what is right, in the face of opposition or recognize what you want, as opposed to what God wants, you must do what God wants, if you would be accepted.

“BY FAITH ABEL OFFERED TO GOD A BETTER SACRIFICE THAN CAIN”

Here is Abel, he does what is right.

And then the last phrase in the verse says, “and through faith, though he is dead, he still is speaking.”

Now what does that mean?

How is Abel speaking to you today?

Well here are three things.

The legacy of a man like Abel in the Hall of Faith as the first guy, there are three things we need to remember:

- 1. You have to come to God by faith.**
- 2. You have to come to God his prescribed way, you can't come your own way.**
- 3. And third – you can come the wrong way and it will lead to rejection on the part of God.**

Now isn't that what Jesus said when He gave His first message on the Sermon on the Mount.

“Many will say unto me on that day Lord, Lord haven't we done many wonderful works and I will say depart from me I never knew you, you workers of iniquity.”

So here in the very first person in the Hall of Faith you have the same statements and warnings given through Abel and the legacy that he leaves behind, as Jesus in His first message that He preaches publicly.

It's to warn people that God means business and you come on His terms and in His way if you are going to enjoy fulfillment in life.

v. 5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he had witness borne that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

You have FAITH WORSHIPPING in Abel but you have FAITH WALKING in Enoch.

Here is a man who walked with God and the walk was so wonderful that one day God took him up and he didn't even see death “for he had witness borne that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.”

**What was it about Enoch that made him so unique?
Do you remember how long this guy lived? 365 years!**

**Do you remember what happened when he was
65 years old that changed his whole life?**

**After living a selfish, indulgent life for 65 years
he and his wife had a little boy by the name of
Methuselah and that changed his life and
for 300 years he walked with God.**

**You might be sitting here today the very same way and
you look back on your life and you remember
the birth of your first child and how it
changed your life and your whole priorities
as you held that miracle of life in your hands.**

For many folks, they can give testimony to that.

**To Enoch that was the turning point in his life.
His little boy was born and for 300 years
he walks with God.**

Now what is the primary focus in your life today?

What is the most important thing to you today?

**If you say anything other than your walk with God
you may want to reevaluate your priorities.**

If you have not had time with the Lord today or

**this week, you have wasted some special days.
A relationship will not continue when there is
constant neglect. Give examples; marriage, etc.**

**It will only be deepened and developed
through relationship and you know that takes time.**

**The one thing God created you for
was for a relationship.**

He doesn't want a performance from you.

**And out of that relationship comes all the joy and
the blessing in your life.**

**There are numerous illustrations through all
of Scripture to help us understand –
GOD WANTS YOUR HEART.**

**And with your heart comes the
deepening of the relationship because that's
the most important thing in your life.**

Elijah went up didn't he without seeing death.

**So there's nothing foreign in what has happened
to Enoch.**

**Back to verse 5, now notice the REASON.
Look at the next phrase,**

“for he had witness borne that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.”

Now do you want to please God?

Let’s learn from Enoch that to please God you have to walk with Him.

You have to get to know Him intimately.

**Enoch exercised faith.
He walked by faith.
He was pleasing to God.**

**Now I’m asking myself, okay,
if I’m walking with God and
I’m deepening my relationship with Him,
what am I going to look like
if I’m pleasing to God?**

Here are three words.

- 1. First of all I’m TEACHABLE.**
- 2. Second, I’m OBEDIENT.**
- 3. And third, I’m TRANSPARENT.
I don’t’ have anything I’m hiding.
I’m open, what you see is what you get.**

I am TEACHANBE,

**I'm OBEDIENT,
I'm TRANSPARENT.**

**Now look at verse 6 this is still
talking about Enoch.**

**v. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him,
for he who is coming to God must believe that He is,
and that He proves Himself a rewarder to those
who are seeking Him.**

**Enoch was rewarded for his walk of faith
by the fact that God called him home
without seeing death.**

**v. 7 By faith Noah, being warned [by God] about things
not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the
salvation of his household by which he condemned
the world and became an heir of the righteousness
which is according to faith.**

Okay, we have,

**FAITH WORSHIPPING IN ABEL,
FAITH WALKING IN ENOCH,
FAITH WORKING IN NOAH.**

Here is a man who is addressing a culture

so similar to our own that is under judgment and he is following God's instructions.

He is a doer of the word.

God speaks clearly to Noah and he is able, after addressing this culture with the right attitude and doing what God says, to save his own family as well as himself in the fact that God is getting ready to judge.

In Noah you see faith at work.

Now verse 8.

v. 8 By faith Abraham, obeyed by going out to a place which he was about to be receiving for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Have you read the story of Abraham recently?

Here is a guy who has a word from the Lord, that he is to leave home.

So he puts a real estate sign "for sale" in his yard and before long he is out of there.

They ask him where he is going and he doesn't know.

And he ends up in the land of Canaan,

the land which God promises him in the covenant and God also promises him a seed but he has a problem, he has a wife who is barren and not able to have kids.

And they're not any young bucks either, they're getting older and older. And time is running out.

But here's a man who with the words and promises of God, steps forth IN FAITH and he moves out.

In Abraham you have FAITH WAITING.

FAITH WORSHIPPING IN ABEL,

FAITH WALKING IN ENOCH,

FAITH WORKING IN NOAH,

FAITH WAITING IN ABRAHAM.

Abraham has to wait 25 years for the fulfillment of the promise.

You can say God may be slow but He's never late.

v. 9 By faith he lived as a stranger in the land of promise, as if it were foreign, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

He was faithful to do so.

**v. 10 for he was looking for the city having foundations,
whose architect and builder is God.**

**What Abraham is telling you is
there is something beyond the here and now.
He wasn't just looking for the land here.
He was looking for that city Revelation 21:2,
the holy city, the new Jerusalem.**

**He was looking for something
beyond the here and now.**

This isn't all there is, Abraham was telling you.

We're just pilgrims passing through.

**v. 11 By faith even Sarah herself received power to
conceive a child, even beyond the normal time of
life, since she considered Him faithful who
promised;**

**Sarah made it because she believed
in the one who is faithful. He had promised.**

1 Thessalonians 5:24

**Faithful is the one who has called you,
who also will do it.**

The fact that you sit here today is the fact

of a testimony of God's faithfulness.

So Sarah is number 5.

v. 12 therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him as good as dead at that, [as many descendants] as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

God told Abraham that was going to happen. And after Isaac was born we have a multitude like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore.

That's Genesis 22:17, the very words of the Lord.

v. 13 All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

ALL THESE, the five people we've just discussed, DIED IN FAITH NOT HAVING RECEIVED THE PROMISES.

Someone might die of cancer when they are 35 but that's His purpose and plan and it doesn't mean that it is bad.

It means that He has some reason for that happening.

And in the process He is going to bless you as you trust the promises of God and you die in faith without realizing those promises but you're still going to realize them someday out there in eternity.

That's why these guys all made it.

They died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles here on earth.

v. 14 For those who are saying such things are making it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

v. 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

If they were thinking about their homeland but they're thinking of the heavenly Jerusalem, the new city which is beyond the here and now.

v. 16 But as it is, they are longing for a better [home], that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for [what?] He prepared a city for them.

Revelation 21 and 22 describes that beautiful city.

v. 17 By faith Abraham, while being put to the test, offered up Isaac; and he who received the promises was offering up his only begotten [son];

What else do we learn from Abraham besides waiting? We learn that when we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus, we can expect to be having our faith tested. And that's the explanation for suffering in our lives as believers a lot of times.

God is refining our faith and testing the validity of it.

He teaches us faith and then He puts us in the storm to see whether we pass the test.

When faith is tested in suffering it's not because God is mad at you or because you have done something wrong.

He is building the virility and the vitality of your faith by what you are going through in the circumstance so that you can be joyful if such is the case.

Isaiah 48:10, 11

**See, I have refined you, though not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.
For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this.
How can I let myself be defamed?**

1 Peter 1:6, 7

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire.

God tests faith.

v. 18 with reference to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.”

v. 19 He considered that God is able to raise [men] even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type.

Do you remember what Abraham said in Genesis 22,? When he got ready to go up and sacrifice he said,

“I and the lad will go yonder and we will return to you.”

In other words, if I put the knife in him up there and he dies there’s going to be a resurrection because he promised descendants.

God has already made that clear.

So he still trusts God.

He considered that God was able to raise him from the dead.

Verse 20, here comes biography number six.

v. 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things about to be coming.

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

Here's Jacob in old age.

And as he's leaning on the top of his staff and he blesses his family.

What does it tell you when you look at guys like this down at the end of their lives?

The strength of their faith at the end of their lives is unabated as they face the future.

It's the apostle Paul saying in 2 Timothy Chapter 4 just before he puts down the pen of inspiration, I've fought a good fight, I've finished the course, I've kept the faith.

There it is.

He's a finisher.

v. 22 By faith Joseph, when coming near to the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

What was the deal?

**He's saying hey look,
I'm still trusting the promises of God and
you are here just for a little while and
when you leave be sure you take my bones with you.**

And what did Moses do?

**In Exodus 13, he took his bones with him
back up to the land of Canaan.**

He's still looking ahead in faith.

**He died in faith not having received the promises
along with the rest of these guys.**

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: Faith involves things hoped for and not yet seen.

LESSON #2: Abel illustrates for us the proper approach to God by means of the sacrifice.

LESSON #3: Cain was rejected because he refused to approach God in the proper way.

LESSON #4: Enoch walked with God in intimate fellowship. Are you in fellowship with the Lord today?

LESSON #5: The rapture of the church can take place at any moment and like Enoch and Elijah, we will be snatched home in the twinkling of an eye.

LESSON #6: Enoch was pleasing to God because he exercised faith.

LESSON #7: His walk by faith involved being teachable, obedient, and transparent.

LESSON #8: Noah walked with God and he “prepared an ark for the salvation of his household.”

LESSON #9: Abraham illustrates for us the obedience of faith.

LESSON #10: God may be slow but He is never late.

LESSON #11: God tested the faith of Abraham with the command to offer up Isaac.

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

PART III

STUDY NUMBER NINETEEN — Hebrews 11:1-22

v. 1 Now faith is the realization of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

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v. 3 By faith we are understanding that the worlds have been prepared by the word of God, so that which we are seeing has not come into being out of things which are visible.

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v. 5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he had witness borne that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

v. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who is coming to God must believe that He is, and that He proves Himself a rewarder of those who are seeking Him.

v. 7 By faith Noah, being warned [by God] about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

v. 8 By faith Abraham, obeyed by going out to a place which he was about to be receiving for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

v. 9 By faith he lived as a stranger in the land of promise, as if it were foreign, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

v.10 for he was looking for the city having foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

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v.22 By faith Joseph, when coming near to the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Hebrews 11:1-22 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.
2. How is faith described in verse 1?
3. What is the difference between Cain and Abel, according to verse 4?
4. What happened to Enoch and why, according to verse 5?
5. What is impossible, according to verse 6?
6. What did Noah do by faith, according to verse 7?
7. What did Abraham do by faith, according to verse 8?
8. What did Jacob do by faith, according to verse 21?
9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?
10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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LESSON #9: Abraham illustrates for us the obedience of faith.

LESSON #10: God may be slow but He is never late.

LESSON #11: God tested the faith of Abraham with the command to offer up Isaac.