

THROUGH THE BIBLE HEBREWS 11

Have you ever said to someone, “Let me show you how that’s done.” *Of course you have! We all have...*

At times the best *explanation* is a *demonstration*.

It’s better to show a person how it’s done, than it is to tell them. Some lessons are **better caught than taught**. As the Scottish preacher put it, “**better felt than telt.**”

And this is certainly true of faith. Warren Wiersbe writes, “**The best way for faith to grow is to walk with the faithful.**” And the author of Hebrews would agree.

He’s been encouraging these Hebrew believers to trust in Jesus - to leave behind the old ways of Jewish religion and follow a person, the living Lord Jesus.

Several years ago my youngest son, Mack, and I visited the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY.

The museum spotlights 300 members who made a memorable contribution to baseball’s 150 year history.

The game’s all-time greats are enshrined in the Hall of Fame. *What a fun day we had touring...* And tonight we’ll have a fun time touring **the Bible’s Hall of Faith**.

Hebrews 11 shines a spotlight on the OT’s greatest examples of trust. Tonight, we’ll walk with the men and women of faith, and pray their example rubs off on us.

The writer begins by defining faith. Verse 1, “**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**” Realize, the Christian life is full of

blessing. Ephesians 1:3 says we're blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

But notice the nature of these blessings – they're "*spiritual*" and "*heavenly*" - and for physical, and tactile, and earthbound people that makes them *slippery*.

Here's our dilemma - the blessings that are ours in Christ are *spiritual* and *eternal*, whereas we live in a *physical body* and we're confined to a *temporal world*.

We're use to interacting with our surroundings through our five senses. Yet spiritual blessings can't be tasted, or touched, or smelled, or seen, or heard...

But God has an answer to our problem... *faith!*

"**Faith is the substance of things hoped for...**" It brings *substance, texture* to spiritual, ethereal realities.

Faith is a handle on our hopes. By faith we grab hold of God's love, power, peace - and truly possess them.

If you have trouble opening a bottle of ketchup you reach for a textured rag or towel. You wrap it around the slick top. The rag provides grip. It gives you the torque you need to twist off the top. And this is what faith does - **faith produces spiritual torque**. It gives you the grip you need to open up the blessings of God.

Faith is the sixth sense that sees spiritual and eternal realities. Oswald Sanders puts it, "**Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen.**" Faith alerts us to the spiritual traffic around us. It opens our eyes to God's work in our lives.

Faith is the bobber you put on your fishing line, that sits on top of the water. With your eyes, you can't tell what's going on under the surface of the water, but when you

see that bobber plunge you know you've hooked a fish. Faith is like a fishing bobber, it alerts you to what's on the end of the line that you can't see.

Verse 2 tells us, **“For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.”** Understand, the impact this chapter had on the Jewish believers to whom it was sent. When they embraced Jesus as their Messiah, and began to walk by simple faith, they were accused by family, and friends, and rabbis of abandoning their Jewish roots.

But here they're assured that a life of faith is a hallmark of their Hebrew heritage - *not a departure*.

As we'll see in this chapter, all the great heroes of Hebrew history gained approval from God by faith.

The Jews thought they had to grind out a goodness through the rituals and rules of their religion. They thought it was up to them to earn their way to God.

It reminds me of a Brazilian man, Marcio da Silva.

Marcio fell in love with a beautiful young lady, 19 year-old Katia. To prove his love, Marcio walked on his knees 9 miles to see this young lady. He cut pieces of tire rubber and tied them to his knees. He shuffled down the freeway for 14 hours - cheered on by motorists and bystanders - until he reached her house.

But the beautiful Katia wasn't impressed. She heard he was coming, and left her house to avoid him.

The Jews were like Marcio. Over their history they made great sacrifices, and performed extreme examples of devotion in an attempt to win God's favor.

Yet God was like Katia. He was unimpressed.

According to verse 2, the elders of Israel *“obtained a good testimony”* - **not by works**, but by *faith in Christ*.

Verse 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.”*

Astronomers now theorize that 98% of the matter in the universe is invisible. The worlds are made up of far more than meets the eye. The universe is *unimaginably large*, but it is also *infinitesimally small*.

At first we discovered the molecule, then the atom, then the electron and proton. Today, scientists talk about quarks, and gluons, and photons, and neutrinos.

Yet the writer of Hebrews was ahead of science. He says here, *“the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible...”* And whether great or small everything that God created began with His Word...

You can't have *faith in God* without *faith in His Word*.

Once, the famous missionary to China, Hudson Taylor, wrote a letter to one of his supporters. In it he boasted of his abundance. *“We have 25 cents and all the promises of God!”* *And that's how faith works...*

God's works all begin with faith in *His Word*. *“Faith believes it to be true, simply because God said so.”*

In fact, *“the worlds were framed by the word of God...”* The Greek word translated *“worlds”* can mean *“ages or periods.”* Both the *physical universe* and the *history of mankind* were formed by God's Word.

God has an unfolding plan. History is not random. It's "His Story." The cornerstone of faith is the realization that God is in control of world events - *and our events* - and it all is going to climax in the kingdom of His Son.

Everyone in the Hall of Faith looks for that kingdom.

Verse 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."

Here's another basic principle of true faith – faith always responds to God on His own terms.

Adam's two sons both offered a sacrifice to God.

Abel *went to his flocks* and slaughtered a lamb...

Cain *went to his fields* and brought a fruit basket...

But Abel offered the "*more excellent sacrifice*" because it was the sacrifice God desired.

Remember when Adam and Eve sinned they covered themselves with fig leaves. It turned out to be a cruel joke. If you've ever handled a fig leaf you know how itchy, scratchy it is... *God is much more merciful...*

Instead of fig leaves, God clothed the fallen family in soft, lamb skins. But since animals don't usually give up their pelts voluntarily that necessitated the killing of a lamb. God taught us that *the wages of sin was death*.

It's been hypothesized that when Cain's sacrifice was rejected he was 129 years-old. He'd been offering lambs on the altar for over 100 years - *he knew better*.

But pride got the best of Cain.

He tried to substitute the work of his hands (*the fruit from his fields*) for the blood of an innocent lamb. God rejected his sacrifice. **Man can never save himself.**

When Cain laid his fruit basket on the altar he was humming Frank Sinatra's anthem, "*I Did It My Way.*"

But you really don't love someone if you just love them "*your way.*" Real love cares for a person in the way they want and need to be loved. Cain said he loved God, but love doesn't stop at what's convenient.

Verse 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.**" Enoch experience what we all hope to one day. He was raptured. One evening after dinner Ole Enoch told Mrs. Enoch he was taking the dog for a walk, and he never came back.

Enoch made it a habit of "*walking with God.*"

He lived in an awareness of God. He sought God's company, and God enjoyed Enoch so much - he finally just brought him right on into His eternal presence.

God beamed him up!

In Genesis 5, at the time of the Flood, God's water judgment, there were three groups of people...

The wicked who drowned...

Noah and his family who survived...

And Enoch who was raptured before the judgment...

It's also interesting that just prior to the end times, when God judges the earth by fire, there'll also be three groups of people... The wicked who die in the Great Tribulation... The Jews who'll survive... And the Church who'll be *caught up* just before God's judgment *comes down*. I believe Enoch is a type of the Church.

Jude 14-15 tells us Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, was a prophet... *and his message?*

The second coming of Christ. *Now that's real faith!*

Verse 6 is the theme of Hebrews 11 - the main point, **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him...”**

Notice he doesn't say, *“without faith it's difficult to please God, or barely doable – no, it's impossible!*

Here's what constitutes true faith, **“for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”** Sincere faith *believes God exists* - and it *expects God to bless*.

“Faith is a God-ward expectation!”

When Natalie was little, she would look up at me with those big blue eyes, and say, **“Daddy, I want some ice cream.”** And I would melt. **“Ok Princess, let's get you some ice cream.”** Kathy would just roll her eyes. When it came to my little girl her daddy *was a soft touch!*

And this is how God is with His kids. He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, *but you have to seek!*

“By faith Noah being divinely warned of things not yet seen...” Remember prior to Noah the Earth was watered by a heavy dew. It had never actually rained.

At the time the Earth had *a different eco-system* - but I'll bet there was *the same cynicism*. Imagine, the catcalls and ridicule. Noah was fodder for the editorial cartoonists. Noah reminds us, *faith is never popular*.

Yet Noah was unmoved by the mockery, because he was “moved with godly fear...” Noah cared about God's approval, more than he did his reputation among men.

Despite the public scorn for the project, he “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.” Noah built an Ark and preached impending judgment by faith.

Faith hears what other people don't. Its privy to info others lack. Faith is often misunderstood and laughed at... *but remember it was Noah who got the last laugh*.

Verse 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.” Abraham comes home one night and announces to Sarah, “Honey, pack up we're moving. The Calvary Chapel folks are coming with a U-Haul.”

“But Abraham, where are we going?”

“Sarah, when God tells me I'll let you know.” What a follow-up discussion that cozy couple must've had.

Noah *believed without seeing*. Abraham *believed without knowing*. And the latter *may be more difficult*.

I don't mind not seeing as long as God tells me what's going on. Its when God conceals details... when I'm expected to *trust Him* where I can't *trace Him*... its when I don't have all the facts that my faith gets tested!

Too many of us are addicted to details. We love to know *why!* Faith though turns the "y" into an "o." **Real faith doesn't need to know why when it knows Who!**

Verse 9, "By faith (Abraham) 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."

Author Kent Hughes helps us think of Abraham's faith in modern day terms, "Imagine God promising you and your descendants the land of Guatemala, and then in obedience traveling there and living for the rest of your life in your camper, along with your sons' families in their campers, moving from place to place. You remain an alien for the remainder of your sojourn, without full citizenship rights, a perpetual outsider."

Abraham was given a land he never fully possess. And he was okay with that... he understood why...

Abraham was actually looking for a heavenly home. He realized in terms of life on earth he was merely passing through. Hey, **we're all just passing through...**

The other night one of the Braves announcers mentioned that one of the injured Braves was "day to day." His sidekick popped in, "We're all just day to day."

This earth - *the dream home, the summer cabin, the exotic vacation* - is not your final destination. You're foolish to make too much of earthly, temporal stuff.

What matters here and now is to secure your citizenship in the eternal city. Heaven is our ultimate destination, and the wise man makes preparations!

“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.**” Abraham was 100, and Sarah was an unbelievable 90, when she birthed the promised child.

Abe and Sarah were the first and only couple in history to qualify for a senior citizen discount on the labor and delivery bill... It was a nature-defying miracle.

Sarah *conceived* because she *believed* - by faith!

Perhaps God wants to work a miracle of new life in you - you're weak and weary - you need strength - then *receive it by faith!* Have you “**judged Him faithful who promised.**” Are you expecting God to meet your need?

Verse 12, “**Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead...**” Here's a major assault on the male ego. Abraham was “**as good as dead.**” He can forget the Viagra. He's beyond hope. He's a step from dead.

Yet God gave him strength, and from Abraham “**were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude - innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.**”

“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.**” This is what faith enables a person to do - **to see what's afar off, then embrace it and use it on the challenge that's up close.**

“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.” This world is full of distractions - which is why a person of faith focuses on *what’s above* and *what’s ahead*. He or she doesn’t get bogged down in *what’s behind* and *what’s around*.

“But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.” **Heaven is the mother country of faith!**

“Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.” People of faith see life, adopt values, and make decisions - from an eternal perspective. This how God wants us to live.

Perhaps you heard the story of pioneer missionary, Henry Morrison. Henry was returning to the states after 40 years in Africa. On board the same boat was the President, Teddy Roosevelt, coming back from a safari.

When the boat docked in New York harbor a huge reception greeted the President. Morrison exited the boat alone, and dejected. After all, he’d just spent 40 years serving the Lord, and now on his return home no one seemed to care. But as he was getting off the boat the Lord reminded him, “**Henry, you’re not home yet.**”

We all should remind ourselves of this same truth. *This world is not our home!*
We’re not home yet!

Verse 17, “**By faith Abraham, when he was tested...**” Notice, God always puts faith to the test!

God promised Abraham and Sarah a son, then after 25 years God performed an incredible miracle - he opened Sarah’s barren womb - and gave them a son.

Abraham's faith had already been tested - *by time, by means* - but the ultimate test of faith is obedience...

After providing them a son, God told Abraham to “offer up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son...” Abraham passed!

But this test was more complicated than what meets the eye. The writer quotes Genesis 21:12, “of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called...”

Another promise had come with the promised son.

Abraham would sire a great nation that would give birth to the Messiah - the Savior of mankind - so if he sacrifices Isaac where's he going to get the grandsons and great-grandsons? What God is commanding seemed to only muddy the water. *It's a crisis of logic...*

The future of a nation - even the promise of God's salvation - is riding on the outcome of Abraham's faith.

The words in verse 17 are so simple, “when he was tested, offered up Isaac...” But they don't do justice to the completeness of Abraham's unquestioning faith...

Genesis 22:3 tells us that the day after the command came, “Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey...” The very next day - *early in the morning*. There was no stalling, no arguing with God, no denying he'd heard, no hesitation... Abraham just obeyed.

I hope my faith never gets tested to this extreme. What would you do if God told you to offer up your only son as a sacrifice? We know what Abraham did...

He took Isaac to the appointed place, strapped him to the altar, raised a knife above his throat... How could he sacrifice the embodiment of all his hopes?

We're told in verse 19, "concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead..." The Greek word translated "*concluding*" is a mathematical term - it's the word "*logarithm.*" It means "to calculate."

Abraham was mathematical in his deliberations.

Often Christians are accused of having "*blind faith*" or "*faith that denies reason*" - but no so. Our faith is reasonable - it just includes God in all its calculations.

Abraham reasoned the situation out. God gave him a son. Isaac was essential to the fulfillment of God's promise. Yet, Abraham was certain God had told him to sacrifice his son – *God must be planning to raise Isaac from the dead!* There had never been a resurrection prior to this, yet Abraham figured out God would do it.

Again verse 19, "from which he also received him in a figurative sense." Abraham never brought down the knife, but in his heart he had sacrificed his son to God.

And in doing so, Abraham was brought into the deepest communion possible with His Father God.

Abraham shared the heart the Father would show 2000 years later when God offered His only Son, Jesus, on that exact same spot outside Jerusalem.

Verse 20, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." This is amazing faith!

Jacob stole his brother's birthright by dressing up like Esau, and fooling Isaac, his nearly-blind dad.

What a dastardly deed - a first-rate con - yet Isaac saw in Jacob's deception God's providence at work.

And through faith he stood by the hijacked blessing.

“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.” By faith Jacob broke with ancient custom.

Apparently, he sensed God’s will for Joseph’s boys and their descendants. So when the day came to bestow his blessing, He crossed hands and blessed the younger, Ephraim, over the firstborn, Manasseh.

God’s will always trumps tradition.

And Joseph also demonstrated faith. “By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.” Joseph arrived in Egypt at 19 years old, he lived there until he was 110.

Yet he knew God’s Word, and that Israel’s future was in the Land of Promise. So as an act of faith, he made his family promise to take his bones back for burial.

And Joseph’s faith was vindicated - 400 years later when Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt they took back Joseph’s mummy... *his mummy, not his daddy...*

Notice the faith of all four patriarchs - Abe, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph - wasn’t a blind faith. It saw farther and deeper. It saw God’s hand at work behind the scenes. It saw His purposes though still in the future.

Realize, the man of faith doesn’t see less than others see - *he actually sees more than other people.*

Verse 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.” Here’s a parental faith in action!

The Jewish historian, Josephus, gives us a reason for Pharaoh’s command to destroy the male infants of the Hebrews, “One of Egypt’s sacred scribes, who was very discerning in foretelling future events truly, told the king, that about this time there would be a child born to the Israelites, who if he were reared, would bring the Egyptian dominion low, and would raise the Israelites.”

Ironically, this king who plotted to kill Moses as an infant ended up financing his childhood and education.

The faith of Moses’ parents led to his survival. They placed him in a basket and floated him down the Nile. He was found and adopted by the Pharaoh’s daughter.

“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter...” It’s hard to imagine the advantages afforded Moses as a member of the Egyptian dynasty. His wealth was inexhaustible.

Yet with the riches of the world at his fingertips, Moses “chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...”

Moses was able to see through the shallowness of Egyptian culture - the vanity of their gods and the capriciousness of their morality. In contrast to their emptiness, he saw in the Hebrews a joy in the midst of distress - a purpose even in the face of hardship.

Moses found fulfillment in what was true and eternal, even though it cost him some momentary discomfort.

God's life, even in suffering, beats the hollowness and destructiveness of *"the pleasures of sin."*

And notice that term, *"the pleasures of sin."* Sin is pleasurable - there's no denying. But the pleasure of sin is fleeting, passing - here today, gone tomorrow. How quickly the *"pleasure of sin"* turns to *pain*.

It reminds me of how eskimos kill wolves. They dip a knife in blood and freeze it - for a wolf it makes for a popsicle of pleasure. The wolf licks away the blood, until his tongue gets down to the blade of the knife.

By this time he's so use to the taste of blood, he doesn't know he's now tasting his own blood. He dies.

And this is sin's trap. At first it tastes good. It's fun.

But at some point - and its not always detectable to you - the pleasure ends and the destruction begins.

Sin can look inviting until you compare it to something else. Thus we're told of Moses in verse 26, *"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."*

In the long run, Moses was better off *suffering* with God's people, than *savoring* the treasures of Egypt.

A tight relationship with the God who created you, and loves you, and wants to bless you for all eternity - is worth far more than anything this world can offer.

In 1946 Akio Morita started a communications business in a bombed-out store in Tokyo, Japan.

Nine years later, in 1955 Mr. Morita's company came out with the world's first transistor radio. Immediately, Bulova, an American company, wanted to sign a deal to sell the radios for Morita - but they wanted to sell them under the name "*Bulova.*" *This bothered Morita!*

He turned down the offer, and use the radios to establish a name brand for his company. It was a tough decision. He was passing on much-needed capital.

Mr. Morita explained his decision to the executives at Bulova, "**I am now taking the first step for the next 50 years of my company.**" Like Moses he decided to forego immediate gratification for long-term reward.

And it worked out pretty good for Moses and Morita.

Shortly before he turned down the deal with Bulova, Morita changed his company name to "**Sony.**"

Akio Morita made a good decision – and you will too by esteeming your relationship with Jesus as more important than anything this world might offer you!

Verse 28, "**By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.**" God told Moses to kill a lamb and spread it's blood on the doorpost of every Hebrew home. The blood was protection from the plague.

And this is now true of Jesus.

In 1 Cortinthians 5:7 Paul says that Jesus is our Passover. By faith sprinkle His blood on the doorposts of your heart and death will *pass over* your life.

“By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.” With their backs to the water, and their faces toward the attacking Egyptian army, Moses had nowhere to go... *but up!* He had faith in God – and God worked a miracle - the seas parted before them!

And do take note of the charitable recounting of this story, *“by faith Israel passed through the Red Sea.”*

O really? At the time, no one expressed much faith.

The Hebrews mourned their demise, and rebuked Moses for bringing them out of Egypt to die by the Red Sea. I’m not sure anyone that day had much faith.

Yet, this is the tenor of the whole chapter.

Noah who was a man of faith, but he also got drunk.

Abraham lapsed from faith to fear and lied twice.

When the promise of a child was first came to Sarah she belly-laughed. It took a while for her faith to warm-up. And on it goes. God commends His people for their faith, while refusing to remember or recall their lapses.

This is the wonder of salvation by faith!

Chapter 10 told us, *“The just shall live by faith!”*

It’s our faith, not works, that makes us right with God.

It’s faith that allows God to forgive to the point of forgetting, then treat us as if we’d never sinned.

Now he begins to scroll through history noting the many examples of men and women who pleased God through faith... Verse 30, **“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.”**

This may've been the greatest example of collective faith in all the OT. Israel's army trusted the strange battle instructions God gave to General Joshua.

They circled the walls seven times on the seventh day, blew their trumpets, and the city walls collapsed!

“By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.” A prostitute's biggest customers were the traveling salesmen who came to town on business.

Rahab had been told by these strangers of a nation that had been delivered from Egypt, preserved by the power of God, and was headed Jericho's direction.

When they arrived and she had the opportunity to give shelter to their spies she was ready to cooperate.

Rahab was a harlot, but she was no fool. She was sure Israel's God was the true God, and because of her faith - as ill-informed and underdeveloped as I'm sure it was - she threw in her lot with the Israelites. And because of her faith reaped the rewards of their victory.

Rahab was **a woman, a gentile, and a prostitute.**

And that combination placed her on the lowest rung of Jewish society - yet, God received her by faith!

You never know where faith might turn up! It can even save the likes of a prostitute like Rahab.

Verse 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: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions...” An obvious a reference to Daniel.

We’ve spent the last five Sunday AMs on the faith of Daniel. The Ladies Bible Study has studied Gideon for seven weeks. Yet here they’re both barely mentioned.

The point is that *everybody* and *anybody* who’s ever become a *somebody* with God got that way by faith!

Verse 34, faith even “quenched the violence of fire...” A reference to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Men of faith “escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again...” *by faith!*

This last statement refers to both Elijah and Elisha.

And notice, in all these rapid-fire examples, faith is never *passive*, but *active*. All the people mentioned are action figures. They act on the what they believe.

By faith battles are won, kingdoms are conquered.

Faith isn’t lethargic - even when it waits it’s always reaching, stretching, and doing something for God!

And faith not only accomplishes, it also endures.

Verse 35, “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.” They could’ve denounced Christ and escaped execution, but they kept their eyes on heaven.

Recall verse 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.”

“Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.” Remember, Jeremiah was chained and thrown into a pit of sludge.

“They were stoned...” The plight of Zechariah.

“They were sawn in two...” There’s a non-biblical book called “*The Ascension of Isaiah*,” and in it we’re told that the false prophets of King Manasseh took Isaiah while he was still alive and had him sawn in two.

Isaiah was the first diagnosis of *a split personality*.

The book says that as they cut into the prophet’s body, *and I quote*, “He neither cried aloud nor wept, but his lips spake with the Holy Spirit.” He endured by faith.

Others “Were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented - of whom the world was not worthy.” These were citizens of heaven.

These men and women of faith were on loan to this wicked world as a witness to the things of God. Yet they were never appreciated. If you want to be a person of faith, don’t expect to be popular in this world.

“They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise...”

Here’s the common denominator with everyone in the Hebrew Hall of Faith - they exhibited faith without receiving the fulfillment of their promise.

They had great faith that *accomplished much - that endured much* - but received little in terms of present, earthly compensation. It’s hope was largely unrealized.

They were given a foretaste, but no one cashed in.

Everyone on this list had to wait! And the reason why is amazing. Verse 40 will literally blow you away...

“God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

The OT saints were content with a promise...

A Savior will come and write God’s law on the tablet of our hearts. He’ll pardon us fully and freely....

Yet all the while they waited - studying God’s law on stone tablets, and offering animal sacrifices as a stop-gap measure to cover their sin. They believed in something better, but they still labored under the Old Covenant. God was making them wait... *on us!*

The New Covenant was not just for Israel, but for all men - *even you and me*. The nation Israel had to wait until God was ready to bring all men into His covenant.

And today these blessings are free for the taking...

Today we enjoy a portion of God’s pardon, and presence, and power... but some of God’s promises won’t be completely fulfilled until we reach heaven.

That's why "*faith*" always has to endure.