

OpenTheo

Hebrews 11



Hebrews - Steve Gregg

In this exposition on Hebrews 11, Steve Gregg analyzes the profound and comprehensive nature of the exposition of faith. He emphasizes that faith is not just about believing in God's existence but rather accessing and trusting in unseen realms that cannot be perceived through the senses. Gregg highlights that faith affects actions, illustrated through the examples of Moses and Rahab, and emphasizes that the value of faith lies in its ability to give access to knowledge and information that cannot be attained through human means. Overall, the talk provides a deep and insightful examination of the concept of faith in the Christian tradition.

Transcript

Right now we're going to be looking at Hebrews chapter 11. And as almost everybody knows, Hebrews 11 is one of those famous chapters in that it is a classic chapter on a major biblical subject. It's sort of like 1 Corinthians 13.

Everybody knows what 1 Corinthians 13 is. It's the chapter about love. 1 Corinthians 15 is the chapter about the resurrection.

Hebrews chapter 11 is the chapter about faith. It really is just a great stand alone chapter. You almost think that, you don't think of it as part of an argument that's been going on through the whole book.

It's just one of those things that can be published as a separate tract on the subject of faith and doesn't even need any context. It provides its own context. However, it does have a context as all things in the epistles do.

It comes up because at the end of chapter 10, really the end of the argument of the book, all that remains now is exhortation. In chapter 10 verses 19 through 25, we are urged to come boldly into the holiest of all. In verse 22 it says, let's draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

He's urging us to have faith. Faith in what? Faith in Christ. Faith in his high priestly work for us.

Faith in the efficacy of his sacrifice, his finished work where he offered himself once and then sat down. We enter into the rest that he spoke of in chapter 4 by faith. At the end of his argument, he urges us to have this strong assurance of faith characterizing us.

At the end of the chapter, he has actually given near the second half or so of the chapter 10, he has given us another warning section about falling away. At the end of that, there's also an exhortation toward faith. For he says in chapter 10 verse 36, for you have need of endurance so that after you've 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, that is draws back from faith, my soul has no pleasure in him.

We're going to see that in chapter 11 verse 6, without faith, it's impossible to please him. God's soul had no pleasure in the person who draws back from faith. And verse 39 says then, but we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe, that's faith, who believe to the saving of the soul.

So he has said that we need to have full assurance of faith in our approach to God. We are saved by faith. God is displeased if we withdraw from faith and we need to believe, that is continue to have faith unto the final point of our salvation.

Now having made faith such an issue in chapter 10, it's only fitting that he should expound on faith. And this exposition on faith in Hebrews 11 is very profound and very comprehensive. In fact, I want to draw quite a few individual points from it.

Some of the points are scattered through the chapter. And so what I'd like to do is read the whole chapter. I haven't done that really with any of the chapters we've covered before.

But we need to have the whole chapter pretty much in suspension in our heads as we look at the individual parts of it. And so I'm just going to read through this chapter and then begin to draw from it comments on important features. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 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. 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. By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death and was not found because God had translated him. For before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God.

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. 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.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance and he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in a 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. 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 the 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.

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. Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

By faith Jacob when he was dying blessed each of his sons the sons of Joseph and worshipped leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph when he was dying made mention of the departure of the children of Israel and gave instructions concerning his bones. 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.

By faith Moses when he came 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. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe when she had received the spies with peace. And what more shall I say for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah also David and Samuel and the prophets who 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, women received their dead raised to life again, and 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. They were tempted.

They were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth.

And 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. Alright, long chapter to read, but we do need the panoramic view of the chapter in order to appreciate it as I want to now extract bits from here and there to make certain points. The chapter begins with something of a functional definition of faith and it says in verse 2, by faith by it the elders obtained a good testimony.

God testified that they were cool. I mean, basically they were justified in the sight of God by faith. And he actually mentions that specifically, for example, in verse 7 at the end it says that Noah, because of his faith, became the heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

The righteousness which is according to faith is, of course, justification by faith. So the elders would refer to the people of the Old Testament who are then, you know, listed. It's interesting, it starts the list quite early, not as early as it could because Adam and Eve are not mentioned.

This raises questions as to whether the author believed that Adam and Eve were people of faith or not. Abel is mentioned first, and then Enoch, and then Noah, and then Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah also, and then it skips to Moses, Joshua's time is mentioned because of the walls of Jericho falling down. The period of the judges is mentioned with Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, Samson.

And after the period of the judges you have Samuel, David, and the prophets, which takes us to the end of the Old Testament really, the prophets were with us until Malachi.

And so there were in all times from Abel until the end of the Old Testament period, people of faith. Now we know as we read the Old Testament that most of the people in the world, and indeed most of the people in Israel, were not of faith.

They were mostly apostate, mostly sinners. But God had a remnant who were of faith. And they were testified to.

God gave testimony to them. I'm not sure exactly in what form the author sees this testimony being. For example, he says that before Enoch was taken up he had this testimony that he pleased God.

I don't know where we read that testimony. It's not mentioned in Genesis chapter 5 where his story is given. But I think what it's just saying is that God in general testifies by remembering these people favorably, by giving them a place in the biblical record among the righteous.

This is God's testimony that they were on the right track. And they are a great cloud of witnesses to us. That is, they bear witness.

They bear testimony to us. They're witnesses. As in a court of law, we have a great cloud of witnesses in this group.

And they are mentioned by that term in chapter 12 verse 1. Now, as we go through the list of the worthies of faith in the Old Testament, which is what occupies almost the entire chapter, we will find that it always says, by faith they, and then there's something. And the something is revealing to us what faith produces, what the results of faith are. And this is a very important thing because of course the author agrees with Paul that we are justified by faith but there should be results of faith.

In fact, back in chapter 6 and verse 9, after one of the warning sections the author says, but beloved, we're confident of better things concerning you. Yes, things that accompany salvation. What kinds of things accompany salvation? Isn't salvation just a ticket to heaven when you die? No.

There are things that accompany salvation. What are those things? Well, they are revealed in the things that accompanied faith. There are accompaniments to faith.

By faith they, and then we read something about their story that is an exhibition of the results of faith in their lives. So we're going to see what faith looks like when it is demonstrated. Now before it begins talking about these people, which it does in verse 4 and following to the end, and by the way, in the stories it digresses sometimes to make a point here or there about them or about their faith in addition to the basic assertion that by faith they did something or another.

Before we get to verse 4 where that begins, we have the first three verses. As I said,

verse 1 really is kind of a definition of faith. Then verse 2 and 3, especially verse 3, actually goes back to the creation, which is before Abel, before the characters knew.

But it's not really that by faith God created the world, as say the Word of Faith people would say, but rather by faith we know that God created the world. Our faith, it comes up first in the discussion. We have faith that God created the world out of nothing.

Our faith is simply the latest of a long line of characters who had faith. It goes back to the earliest and moves forward up to the time of the readers themselves almost. So let's look at the definition in verse 1 because that is sort of the topic sentence of the chapter.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for. It's the evidence of things not seen. It is substance and it is evidence.

What does that mean? It is substance of things that are hoped for. Things that are hoped for refers to things that haven't yet happened. Desirable things, but we have not yet seen them materialize yet.

They are promised. Remember in chapter 10 in verse 39 it says you have need of endurance so that after you've done the will of God you may receive the promise. So there's a promise to obtain.

It has not yet occurred. It is still hoped for. Faith is the evidence excuse me, the substance.

I don't want to get this mixed up. Faith is the substance of things that are hoped for. Now how can something that has not yet happened have any substance at all? It's not substantial.

It doesn't have tangible reality by definition if it's hoped for its future. It has not materialized yet. How could there be substance to something that has not happened? Well faith is the substance of that.

That is to say do I hope for a resurrection? I do. Do I have to wait until then to appreciate it? No, I can appreciate it now. I can embrace it now as if it's substantially real because my faith lays hold on the promise of God and it makes it a reality to me of sorts.

It'll be a different kind of reality when it actually happens. In the meantime I can enjoy it as if it's already a possessed reality. I can put my arms around it and embrace it.

It's substantial because of faith. You know when you're going through a trial, you're hoping for the end of the trial. And you know there will be an end to it because trials come and they go.

They don't always last but you never know how long they'll last. Some of them even last till you die. But then they end.

Trials are all temporal. They're not eternal. And that being so when you're in a trial in any hardship you look to the promise that this is going to end.

In fact there's more than that. There's a promise that it'll work together for the good of those who love God and who are called according to His purpose. In Romans 8.28 we know that all things do that.

So in a sense whenever you're going through something very discouraging or very difficult to bear there is a promise of God. A. It's not permanent. Remember Paul said, our light affliction which is but for a moment works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4 I think it's around verse 18 if I'm not mistaken thereabouts 17 maybe. He said our light affliction is only for a moment but it works for us something greater an eternal weight of glory. So when I'm in a trial I'm in something that's transient.

It's promised it'll end. It's even promised that I'll appreciate it later because it'll work something good for me. I can look back.

Job said when he has tried me I shall come forth as gold. These kinds of promises and Peter says the same thing to the Christians in 1 Peter 1.7 where he says that the trial of your faith be much more precious than gold though it is tried with fire. And so trials are a good thing ultimately.

They're not good when you're going through them but here's the point. If God has promised that I will have occasion to be glad someday as I look back on this trial. And I have found this to be true in my experience too.

I've been through trials which at the time I couldn't even imagine. A that life could be survivable again someday or B that I'd be glad that it happened. I couldn't imagine it but I knew it was true because the Bible says so.

The promise of God. Your faith lays hold on the promise of God and the outcome of the trial which has not yet occurred. The thing that is hoped for because it is not yet seen you can embrace it.

You can rejoice in trials just like you would rejoice when the trial is removed because you know the trial will be removed and things will be better as a result. And you figure well someday I'm going to rejoice through this. Why wait until then? I can rejoice in it now because I believe God about that.

That's what Paul says in Romans chapter 5. In the opening verses of Romans 5 he says therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and

we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. That's future. And not only that but we also glory in tribulations.

Why? Because we know that tribulations produce perseverance and character hope. Things hoped for have not yet happened but while we're in our tribulations we know because God said so and we believe it our faith lays hold on it. We can rejoice now.

I know I'm going to rejoice later. It's not easy to rejoice in a trial but I know that when it's over I'll be rejoicing like crazy. Well since it's going to be over and I know that and I believe that I can embrace that.

That can become a reality of sorts for me to lay hold on and rejoice in now. This is our only stability in a world that's full of disasters and loss and pains and so forth and that is that there is a hoped for resolution in the short term perhaps when a trial actually ends within our lifetime or at the end when it ends with our death and we look forward to the resurrection. This is what we hope for.

We can rejoice in it now because faith in it because God has said it and that settles it. I can embrace it now as if it's substance right here in my presence now. The thing that I hope for is made substantial and real by my believing what God has said that gives me the basis for that hoping.

So faith in a sense realizes for us that which is not yet occurred but which God has promised and is therefore our hope. Then it is also the evidence of things not seen. Now things not seen might just seem to be the same thing as things hoped for.

We haven't yet seen the things that we hope for but things not seen, that's a broader category. Things that haven't happened yet are among the things that are not presently seen but there are things that are happening right now that are not presently seen because there's an invisible realm. There are angels.

There are demons. There's God. There is a spiritual reality.

There's spiritual status that we're told that we have. Our faith in God accesses for us these unseen realms because we can't see them with our eyes. Now living as we do in two realms, a seen and an unseen realm, a physical and a spiritual realm.

We know there are people in this room because our eyes and our senses tell us that. We know there are angels and God in this room but not because our eyes and senses tell us that. That's in the unseen.

How do we know that? Well because God said it and we believe it. If we believe it we can be aware of things we could not otherwise be aware of that are unseen. Faith is the evidence that these things are real and true.

In a court of law the best evidence for an accident or a crime or something that a witness wishes to testify to is eyewitness. If you are called to a witness stand and they say, well what happened? You say, well I heard this guy say this happened. They say that's hearsay.

That's not admissible in court, hearsay evidence. I want to hear an eyewitness because eyewitness evidence is the very best evidence available of what is visible. But what's the very best evidence of things not seen? What corresponds to the eyesight, spiritually speaking? Well, faith.

Faith in God. Not only faith in God though. Frankly all people have faith.

It's just that not all have faith in God. Human beings are faith creatures. We trust.

We trust people all the time. We trust the newspapers somewhat. We trust people who tell us their testimony.

We trust all kinds of things. We trust most people who give us back change at the cashier to give us the right change. At least I do.

I don't always count the change. I'm sure he probably got it right. You know, we trust people all the time.

When you drive your car you trust other drivers to be as conscientious as you are. You don't know that they can be trusted and sometimes they can't. Sometimes the cashier gives back the wrong change.

You trusted them but they weren't trustworthy. You trusted the other driver but he was texting and he came across and hit you head on. Not everyone you trust is trustworthy.

God is. Nonetheless all people trust. If you couldn't trust you'd lock yourself up in a padded room in a bunker and you couldn't have anyone ship you food.

You couldn't trust them. You'd have to grow your own food. I don't know how you'd work it out.

You really couldn't live without faith in some other people who bring the food, who cook the food, who work the water treatment plant. You trust that when you flush the toilet that's not going to go into your sink. You know, you figure somebody has worked out the plumbing.

You trust people all the time. You can't live without faith. But not everyone has faith in God.

That's the distinction of the Christian. The value of faith, or certainly one value of faith, is its ability to give us access to information that we can't figure out or find out for

ourselves. I know a great deal about world geography, although I have not traveled to all the places I know about.

I've seen them on maps. I've seen National Geographic specials and magazines and so forth. I have seen photographs of places I've never been.

I trust that they are, that the caption of the photograph is telling the truth. That really is, you know, Irian Jaya. That really is Nepal or whatever.

You know, I don't really know that, but I trust them. And because I trust them, I can know things that I wouldn't otherwise find out without going there myself. I can't go to every country in the world, but I can know where they are if I trust someone who made a map and figure he knew what he was talking about and he's not lying to me.

He could be lying to me, and he might be incompetent, but some of the ancient maps of Columbus Day and so forth weren't very reliable. People may have trusted them to their hurt. But you see, what faith allows us to do is know stuff that we couldn't otherwise know.

And I once, when I was young, I was wondering, why does God make faith such an issue? Why is it justification by faith, prayers are answered by faith, you receive the Holy Spirit by faith, demons don't go out if you have unbelief, you know, let not anyone who doesn't have faith think he'll receive anything from the Lord, James says. Why is that such a big deal? Why faith? I remember as a child, I thought, because I didn't know, maybe it's because faith is something everyone can do. And if God's going to make salvation available to everyone, he chooses something that everyone could do.

For example, he says, I'm going to save everyone who can, you know, shoot ten baskets in a row from a free throw line. Well, some people would probably go to heaven, but most of us would not. Not everyone can do that.

But some people can. But by making it faith, even a child can have faith. So even a somewhat mentally deficient person can have faith.

So I thought, well, maybe God made it faith as the standard that he's looking for, because that way everyone's got a chance at it. But I realize now that if that is part of his reason, it isn't, it certainly isn't his whole reason, and it may not be his main reason. I think the reason God wants us to have faith in him is because there's things he wants us to know that we can't know unless we believe him when he tells us so.

I can't know where Irian Jaya is unless I believe the mapmaker who put it on the map, because I haven't been there. I can't know that the universe is made up of atoms. I've never seen one.

I've never seen an atom or an electron, but I believe it if somebody smarter than me who

knows more than me has said so and I think they're trustworthy, I can know that. I can know things by faith. If we didn't have faith in anybody, we would know only that narrow range of things that we have proved by our own personal experience to be true, and that would be almost nothing compared to what we could otherwise know.

And God wants us to know about himself. He's invisible. He wants us to know that we are secure because the angel of the Lord encamps around them that fear him and delivers him.

He wants us to know there's a spiritual warfare and the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and that we're wrestling against principalities and powers and that our name is written in heaven. All these things are unseen things. He wants us to know.

We couldn't know without faith. We could only know a very few things without faith, but faith is the evidence of things that are unseen and there's a great number of unseen things that God wants us to know, which we could not know unless we just trust him when he says so because we haven't seen it. We can't prove it.

We have to trust him or not. If we don't trust him, we won't know. We can't know.

Most of what we know about any subject is by trusting somebody who knew more than we do and everything we know about God and the unseen realm and the spiritual realm, we know because of God saying so and we believe it. Faith is the evidence of the unseen realm. I believe that you might say, I think I'm saying this for shock value rather than because it's true, but it really is true.

I can actually be more certain that there are angels in this room than that you are in this room. I'm not being funny about that because I'm obviously pretty sure you're in this room, but the only way I know you are is that my senses tell me that. Frankly, I've had vivid dreams before where I thought I was in the presence of people.

When I woke up, I wasn't. I don't think this is a dream. It doesn't feel like a dream to me, but sometimes dreams don't feel like dreams until you wake up.

That is to say, I'm pretty sure that you're here, but I've got nothing better than my senses to tell me that. My senses sometimes are mistaken, but I know there's angels here because I have the Bible. I've got God's promise that that is true and God never is wrong.

I have actually better evidence for things unseen than the evidence of my own eyesight of the things that are seen. Faith is so central to what God wants. He wants us to embrace things that are not yet, which are in one sense unseen because of the future, but there's a whole sense of present things that are unseen in the spiritual realm.

He wants us to know those things too. That's what faith is for. He says the elders obtained a good testimony about that.

Now in verse 3 it says, By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. We know that by what? Well, by Genesis chapter 1. God said, let there be light. God said, let dry land appear.

God said, let there be a firmament. God said, let the plants come. God said, let the waters abound.

God said it. That's the word. Do we believe that? If we believe God's word, then we do understand how the world came into being through the word of God.

Now people who don't have faith in God or in his word, what do they think? Oh, any number of things different than that, but invariably something different than that. Some form of evolution, the big bang, whatever that people come up with, they are trying to figure it out because it's something unseen. No one saw it happen.

And if they don't have faith in God's word, they don't know what happened. They can only guess. They might guess nearer or further from the actual facts, but no one knows for sure except those who've been told by God and who believe God.

And we have been told by God and therefore by faith we understand what would otherwise be not possible for people to know or understand. That the worlds were framed by the word of God so that the things which are seen were not made by things that are visible. Now I want to talk to you about five results of faith in this chapter.

Five results of faith that keep being mentioned in the chapter with reference to different individuals and different contexts in the chapter. The first thing I want to talk about is how faith serves us in the spiritual realm as vision does in the physical realm. If faith is the evidence of things unseen just as vision is the evidence of things that are seen then faith in a sense is vision of another realm.

It doesn't mean you get visions, although some people do. That's not what I'm referring to. I'm not talking about having a vision where you get a picture in your head or something like that that God's revealing.

While I believe in such things, that's not at all what I'm referring to. I'm just talking about normal faith for the normal person serves as vision serves for the visible realm. Now none of us is blind here fortunately and therefore we take for granted a great deal that I could walk into the kitchen and get myself a glass of water and come back without stubbing my toe or running into something or ending up in the wrong room because I simply don't know where the kitchen is.

I can see the kitchen from here. I can see what the obstacles are. A blind person doesn't

take that for granted like we do.

We just do it. We live with a knowledge of reality that enables us to navigate more safely, more effectively our life in the visible world. Now how are we going to navigate our lives in the invisible world? There's certainly a lot to know about it.

There are dangers there just as there are in the physical world. There are courses to take that lead to blessing and courses to take that lead to disaster. These are spiritual and moral issues that are not in the visible realm.

Scientists can't discover them. You can't see them with your eyes. So how do you navigate that? Just as your vision allows you to navigate in the visible realm, faith in God's revelation of himself and of his ways gives us the perspective and the vision to navigate the spiritual realm.

We can see when someone's going the wrong way spiritually. They can't if they don't have faith because really what constitutes the wrong way spiritually is not part of the visible reality. That's something we see through faith in God's word.

I want to show you how many times this aspect of faith is brought up in Hebrews chapter 11 not only in verse 1 where it says it's the evidence of things not seen but in the verse we read in verse 3. By faith we understand. We have some perception of something by faith that we wouldn't otherwise have perception of. What is it? That the visible world, the invisible world was not made up of things that are visible.

That is we believe that invisible reality God, his word and so forth created the visible world. How would we know that? You can't see invisible realities. Well, God said so.

Now I realize that some people say this is a sort of a pre-scientific revelation of the reality of atoms and subatomic particles that the visible world was made up of things that we can't see. A lot of times people trying to prove the inspiration of scripture will point out well, we know that's true now because we know about atoms and molecules and they didn't know about that back then so this is like a revelation of God that the physical world is made up of invisible things. Well, it is but I don't think that's what he's saying.

I don't know that he's trying to say that we understand the world's made of atoms because I don't know how we would. God hasn't revealed that in the Bible. The Bible doesn't talk about atoms.

He's not saying that. He's saying that what is unseen, the unseen realm is where God is and his word is and his pre-creation existence is a part of the unseen reality and it was from that unseen realm that the seen realm was created. It came to existence out of nothing.

We see that by faith. And if you go down to verse 7 it says, by faith Noah being divinely warned of things not yet seen. Now in this case this was future things, a flood.

There had never been a flood to cover the whole earth before. In fact some people say there wasn't even rain before Noah's day. They would even use this verse.

He was warned of things not yet seen, rain. But of course it doesn't say rain. He was warned about a flood.

A flood like that had never been seen before. No one had ever seen a flood that covered the whole earth. But Noah believed it.

He saw it coming, though it had not yet been seen. His faith gave him awareness of an invisible thing. No one else could see it.

No one else had ever seen such a thing. It was not in the realm of the seen. It was in the realm of the unseen.

Yet he knew about it. He could see it in a sense by faith and it was vivid enough for him to motivate him to spend a great number of years preparing an ark to save his family. If you look further down in the narrative in verse 13, talk about Abram, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah.

It says, these all died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them afar off. They were assured of them and embraced them. See how I said that faith is the substance of things that are far off, that are not seen, that are hoped for? You can embrace it.

It's like it's physical. It's not physical yet, but your faith actualizes it in a sense that you can actually embrace it now as if it was physically in your presence. They could see it afar off.

Now I don't know that we're to understand that they actually had visionary experiences like dreams and visions about this thing. I think it's simply saying that God told them it was going to come and it was as good as if they could see it. They could embrace that as a reality because of the faithfulness of God and their trust in his faithfulness.

They saw it. Faith is like eyesight of things that are not seen. Verse 20 says, By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

Again, things that were invisible at the time. On his deathbed or not quite on his deathbed, he thought he was on his deathbed. He lived actually quite a long afterwards.

Isaac gave prophetic blessings concerning Jacob and Esau. These things had not yet been seen, but by faith he knew they were going to. Apparently he was receiving revelation from God and he believed that revelation so he could see into the future

sufficiently to pronounce these prophetic blessings.

In verse 23, it says, By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents because they saw that he was a beautiful child. Now that's the physical eyesight. However, is that really all there is to it? They hid him because they saw he was cute? A cute baby? Well, aren't all babies cute? Or most of them anyway? Why would the fact that their child was cute or a beautiful child cause them more than someone else to protect their baby from Pharaoh's order to kill him? Wouldn't everybody think their baby's cute? Wouldn't everybody want to save their baby? Obviously there's something more going on here.

They saw something in their child that made them feel they need to protect this child more than the average parent would naturally be inclined to protect their child. And I believe what it was is a child that was especially beautiful. I think the ancients would take that as a token that there's some special blessing from God on it and that there's perhaps some special purpose that God has in it.

In any case, they were seeing something. It says it was by faith that they did. They saw something in this child.

They saw he was a beautiful child and apparently reached some kind of conclusions about that, about the importance of that child, and therefore they risked everything to defy Pharaoh and preserve him. Of Moses, it says, in verse 26 and 27, he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. Now, treasures in Egypt were physical material treasures.

The reproach of Christ? What kind of treasure is that? That doesn't look like a treasure. Who would look upon the reproach that comes and the persecution that comes for righteousness and say, boy, is that worth a lot? Certainly worth more than these tangible treasures of Egypt. That takes a kind of faith that sees something in the realm of the spirit that the average person wouldn't see.

Most people would say, why make those sacrifices just to suffer with these people? Moses saw something that others wouldn't see there, so he evaluated those sufferings differently. It says in verse 27, by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, because he endured as seeing him who is invisible. Seeing him who is invisible? Isn't that what faith is? It's the evidence of the invisible? He didn't see God in that early stage.

He later did in the burning bush and so forth, but this is talking about when he first left Egypt. It was 40 years later before he ever saw God. Here, those 40 years he endured, he endured as a man who is seeing God, who is in fact invisible.

He didn't see God, but he had faith. By faith he endured, as if he could see the invisible.

Now, if you were going through any hardship, do you think it would be of benefit to you if God appeared visibly with you and said, I'm with you, and would walk alongside you through the hardship? Is there anything that you would fear if you could tangibly reach out and touch or visually see Jesus walking with you? I can't imagine that that wouldn't be strengthening.

It says that Moses couldn't see that, but he endured as if he could. The strength that one would receive from seeing God there, he received that strength by faith, knowing by faith that God was there. It was as if he could see Him.

And then further down, in verse 35, it says, in the latter part of it, it says, others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Well, that takes faith that there's going to be a better resurrection someday, so I'm going to go ahead and be tortured and not accept deliverance. You're seeing something others don't see.

You're seeing something in the future that others don't see, and it strengthens you now. It's the substance of things hoped for that encourage you and strengthens you, when others couldn't be strengthened because they don't have that faith. They can't see that.

So, one of the effects of faith, or the results of faith in the life of these believers that we read about, and even us, is the ability to see what others do not see, spiritually speaking. It gives us vision and access and knowledge of the unseen realm. That's in the very definition of faith in verse 1, and it's illustrated in a number of places where it actually it is likened to seeing things that are really quite invisible.

And, of course, the impact it has on the person that has faith, you act differently if you see things. If I saw a tiger walk in the front door in the other room, I would act differently than if I don't. I don't, so I'm not doing what I would do if I saw one there.

But if a tiger walked in the living room and I saw it, it would affect my behavior in a certain way. I can see that there's not one there right now, so that affects my behavior in a different way. What you see and take in of your environment, the reality around you, is going to dictate how you think, how you feel, how you act.

And faith gives you vision of a realm that you don't otherwise know about, and it's that access to that realm that makes you think and feel and act differently than people who don't have faith. Which is our next point. The next point, as a result of faith, is that people who have it obey God.

In other words, faith does affect your actions. Faith is not simply knowing something. It is knowing something and acting appropriately.

Remember James said, faith without works is dead. The writer here is very clear on that as well. Notice, when he goes through this list of people, not everyone, but most of

them, he says, for example, verse 4, by faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice.

He did something. We're not ever going to find it saying, by faith so and so believed such and such. No, by faith so and so did something.

It's what they did that showed they had faith, not what they professed to think or believe. By faith, Abel offered a better sacrifice than he would have. In verse 7, by faith Noah prepared an ark.

He worked hard. His works showed that he really believed the promise of God. In verse 8, by faith Abraham obeyed God.

In verse 17, by faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. That's certainly putting his money where his mouth is. Verse 24, by faith Moses, when he came to age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

He made the right choice, choosing, verse 25, rather to suffer than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He made choices, life choices, obedient to God, conforming with what he knew to be true of the spiritual realm. His actions followed suit.

Verse 27, by faith Moses forsook Egypt. That was a big move. Verse 28, by faith he kept Passover.

Now you say, what's so faith about that? Well, God said if you don't do it, the death angel's going to take your firstborn. Well, that sounds kind of weird. That's never happened before.

How do I know it's going to happen? Well, because God said it. Well, then I'm going to keep the Passover. I'm going to eat that meal with my shoes on and my staff in my hand, knowing that before I have time to sit down, we're going to be leaving here.

We're going to get away from Pharaoh. We've been here for 400 years, but we're leaving tonight. We're going to keep the Passover.

That's faith. They acted differently that night than they would have if they hadn't believed what God said. They would have just gone to bed and woken up with dead babies.

Instead, they acted on what God said, saved their babies that way, and also were prepared to walk out of Egypt. You see, what these things are saying is by faith these people did what they were told. By faith Abraham obeyed God.

By faith Noah built an ark. By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice. That's the second result of faith, obedience to God.

When people say they have faith but they don't have works, they don't have faith like the Bible is talking about. This is New Testament here. It's not Old Testament.

It's talking about Old Testament stories, but the teaching is a New Testament teaching. It was faith, the kind of faith that's been enjoined on the readers, to the New Testament believers, that these people had that kind of faith. This is what it looked like.

It looked like obedience. That's the second thing. The third thing that we see as a result of faith is found in a few places like verse 23.

Let's not look there yet. Let's look a little further up. We'll go back to 23.

Verse 29, by faith they passed through the Red Sea safely as they escaped Egypt. Verse 30, by faith the walls of Jericho fell down. Verse 31, by faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who didn't have faith.

Then especially in verses 33 and 34 and 35, these people 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, women even received their dead back to life again by faith. What do these examples have in common? They have in common God's intervention to preserve, to save, to grant victory to his people against their enemies. In other words, they saw good things happen.

They survived things they wouldn't have survived. They conquered cities they wouldn't have conquered. They survived being thrown into the lion's den, which they wouldn't have survived, or being thrown in a fire furnace.

That's what it means they quenched the violence of fire and stopped the mouths of lions. Let's talk about those kinds of cases. People who were in danger and facing great challenges, things that were frankly something that human power could not have helped them with.

Human power would not have knocked down the walls of Jericho, or stopped the mouths of the lions in Daniel's lion's den. Human power couldn't deliver them from the fire furnace, as Nebuchadnezzar himself implied with his rhetorical question, who is he who will deliver you out of my hand if I throw you in the fire furnace? Their answer was, well, our God is able to do that. Well, that's right.

Through faith, people saw supernatural intervention from God in situations that were beyond human control. In other words, God's faith is a supernatural life. Faith, if you're a person of faith, you're going to see things happen from God that need to happen.

You'll see prayers answered. You'll see deliverances. You'll see divine appointments that are set up.

You'll find that you overcome enemies, maybe even sin in your life, that you have no power to overcome. The intervention and assistance of God came in necessary situations to people who had faith. That's what is being said here.

And I started to read at first verse 23, but I wanted to hold off to this point because it's not as obvious that that's what it's saying, but it says, by faith, Moses when he was born was hidden three months by his parents. Now, you might say, well, was that faith on the part of parents or was that just what any parent would do? Hide their kid from people who want to kill them. It wasn't Moses' faith.

By faith, Moses was hidden, but he was a baby. He didn't have any faith. What is being actually said here? I think what we're being shown here is that because of the faith of Moses' parents, he was successfully hidden for three months.

How many parents probably tried to hide their kids from Pharaoh's soldiers, but they got caught anyway. There is a miraculous preservation here of Moses. Sure, his parents did what they could, but no doubt many parents did what they could and weren't able to save their children from the swords of the Egyptian soldiers.

But it doesn't just say by faith Moses' parents tried to help him survive. It says, by faith, he was hidden for three months. Their faith and God's providence caused Moses to be successfully and safely hidden for those three months and not caught when he could have otherwise been.

These are examples that the writer of Hebrews gives of how faith results in God coming to the aid of his people. That people are not dependent upon human limitations or human ability if they have faith in God. With God, nothing should be called impossible.

Those who believe that will find that to be true in many situations. Many, but not all. That's the next point.

The next result of faith is heroic suffering and even martyrdom. This is a fourth evidence of faith. We find these examples mainly couched in a passage here, verses 35-38.

There is a hint of that in verse 27 also. By faith, Moses forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as a man of faith. When it says he didn't fear the wrath of the king, that could be misunderstood.

He did. If you read the story in Exodus, it says that when he killed the Egyptian, he hoped no one saw it. The next day, it became evident that someone had seen it.

The story was going around that this Egyptian man had killed another Egyptian in favor of the Hebrews. When Moses knew the thing was known, he was afraid. He fled from Egypt.

So he really was afraid. When it says he didn't fear the wrath of the king, he did. But what's this saying? I think it's saying the same thing about his parents.

In verse 23, it says they were not afraid of the king's commandment. Well, they were. I'm sure they were.

Who wouldn't be afraid of the king's commandment? He says, kill your kids. I would not make anyone comfortable. That's scary.

Likewise, he feared the king. But why does it say of them they didn't fear? I think what it's saying is that their faith neutralized their fear. Sure, they felt fear, but they did the right thing anyway because they had faith.

When there's a conflict between duty that is scary and neglect of duty that seems a more secure way to go. Your faith tells you this is your duty, but there's also something scary about that. Courage is when you do it anyway.

You do feel that fear, but you act as if you don't have fear. You do the right thing as if you didn't fear. I think that's what's really being referred to here because they did feel, certainly, sensations of fear.

All people do when they're in danger. But that's not the same thing as overcoming fear. I believe they overcame fear through faith and could thus be said to not be fearing in their actions.

They did what was right as if they didn't fear. Faith neutralized the influence of their fear. Here's the other section.

Verse 35, in the middle it says, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two.

They were tempted, they were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins. Hey, whatever happened to this deliverance and turning to flight the enemies and escaping the edge of the sword? These were killed by the sword.

Some escaped the edge of the sword by faith, in verse 34. But in verse 37, some of them were killed by the sword and sawn in two, even worse. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being desolate, afflicted, tormented.

These must have not have had the same kind of faith the others did. Because, I mean, some had faith and they had all victory. This must be something else, a lack of faith on these parts.

But it says, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and dens of the caves of the earth. These all, having obtained a good testimony through

faith.

These had faith too. The ones who died by the sword had as much faith as the ones who escaped the sword. The ones who died burned at the stake had as much faith as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who didn't die in the flames.

Those who were fed to the lions by Nero died in faith, though Daniel was fed to the lions and he didn't die. This simply indicates that while it is true that faith brings God's deliverances when He wants it to, it still is up to Him. You don't manipulate God by having faith.

You don't say, I have faith, therefore God's going to have to fix this. Well, I have faith in God. Not in Him fixing it, I have faith in Him, as my Father, as my God, as a person who is reliable.

I trust that He will do what is right. If He wants me to escape the edge of the sword, that's exactly what's going to happen. If He wants me to be slain by the sword, that's what's going to happen.

I trust Him. I have the same faith trusting Him when He's not bringing deliverance. Job said, even if He slays me, I will still trust Him.

Job would have rather trusted Him to fix things, and actually that's what God eventually does, but Job said it doesn't matter if He fixes it or not. If He kills me, it's okay. I just still trust Him.

I trust who He is. I trust His good intentions. I trust that He knows what He's doing.

I trust that His choice is better than mine. That's faith in God. It's not believing He's going to heal me.

It's not believing He's going to keep me alive. It's believing that if that's the right thing to do, that's what He'll do. If it's not the right thing to do in this situation, then I trust Him to do what is right, even if that means I'm slain by the sword, fed to the lions, burned at the stake, walk around in goat skins and sheep skins and live in caves and dens of the earth.

If that's what He has for me, well, that's fine. These all died in the same kind of faith. So, the fourth evidence of faith, and we do need to wind this up quickly, is the heroic suffering and martyrdom.

And there's a fifth, and that is the final and perhaps most important result of faith is God's approval. God is pleased with faith. He approves.

He testifies on behalf, favorably toward. And we see that in verse 2. In verse 4, it says that by faith Abel offered a better 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 to us today.

In verse 5, it says by faith Enoch was translated. At the end of it, it says that before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him.

Of Noah, it says at the end of verse 7, he became the heir of the righteousness, which is according to faith. That is God, because His faith declared Him righteous, like He did Abraham later. If you go on further down, it says in verse 16, but now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly country.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God. He approves of them. He's pleased of them.

He's proud of them. To have God's approval is the most important thing. Not to escape the edge of the sword.

Not to see the unseen realm. The most important thing is that God is pleased. He is pleased by faith.

It's impossible to please Him without it. In verse 39, it says again, all these having obtained a good testimony, that is God testified of their goodness, they received that through their faith. They didn't receive the promise.

They didn't live to see the promises that were made. They lived and died in the Old Testament. They didn't see Christ in the fulfillment that they looked for.

That's happened now. It says, God having provided, verse 40, something better for us, that is a better covenant, better promises, a better experience of actually knowing and seeing. Remember, Jesus said to His disciples, blessed are your eyes because you see and your ears because you hear.

Many prophets and righteous men wanted to see and hear what you see and hear, but they couldn't. You get to. God provides something better for us than for them.

We get to see this stuff. They had faith like we are required to have. They received a good testimony from God just like we do by the same means.

God provided something better for us that they should not be made perfect apart from us. They would not be made perfect apart from us is really an awkward sentence. It could mean more than one thing.

I'll just tell you because I don't have time to survey all kinds of possibilities. I think it probably means that their number was not complete without us being added to it. They weren't the whole allotment of faith people.

Our running the race of faith is adding to their number. Their number is not complete without including us in it. We are, in a sense, running the same race they are.

That's why chapter 12 verse 1 says, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, then, let us lay aside every weight and sin that easily ensnares, and let us run with endurance the race that's set before us. We have them as our examples. They are testifying to us that this is the way to go.

Live by faith and have these results in your life. Having those witnesses testifying to us about that, we should be encouraged in our running of that race, he says. We are out of time now for further consideration.

There certainly are some verses in chapter 11 I'd like to have covered. Maybe I'll say a few things about a few of them when we come back to chapter 12, just because it's a shame to leave them unsaid.