

1. Righteousness According to Faith (Heb 11:1-7)

Having just referred to Habakkuk's timeless declaration, "*The just shall live by faith*" (Heb 10:38; Hab 2:3-4), the author now develops the concept of faith by appeal to historical possessors of it. Those cited in this famous chapter would be acknowledged as heroes by those of Hebrew ancestry. His aim is to help these brethren see that their adherence to Christ is parallel to the faith of Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc. Faith is able to "see" what is invisible; it is a confidence in God that accepts and obeys His word when one's experience, feelings and desires are to the contrary. Thus "*by faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark ...*" (Heb 11:7). Without this quality of faith, "*it is impossible to please*" God (11:6).

1. What witness was born to Abel by virtue of his sacrifice?
2. What was the testimony of Enoch?
3. T/F Absolute, objective proof exists that God created the material universe.

2. Yearning for a Homeland (Heb 11:8-16)

The author next pauses at Abraham, the quintessential patriarch of faith, and examines the seeds that grew into an ancient and storied nation. To inherit the land so beloved by Israel, Abraham had to leave his home for an unknown destination and, once there, re-side in tents as an outsider (Heb 11:8-9). For a nation to arise from him, he and his wife faithfully acted in accordance with God's promises (11:11; Rom 4:19-21). Thus the lives of Abraham and Sarah present an analogy of the Christian endeavor, for we are likewise on a journey and living as sojourners. Abraham not only had his sights on a tract of land, "*he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*" (11: 10). Had he been otherwise minded, he would have simply returned to Ur (11:15-16). And if these brethren turn back from God now, they would betray the very ancestor in which they had so much pride.

4. Of whom is God not ashamed? What has He done for them?
5. What did Abraham only see afar off?
6. What encouraged Sarah to conceive by Abraham?

3. Faith in the Lineage of Abraham (Heb 11:17-22)

The author here connects faith to the prospect of death, for this is faith's ultimate challenge. Regarding God's command to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, Abraham obeyed "*accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead*" (Heb 11:19). That degree of trust is astounding, but Abraham possessed it nonetheless. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph possessed a similar faith that enabled them to look beyond their own lives and confidently assert what would be in

the future (11:20-22). Too, these ancestors all *per-severed in faith unto death*, a fitting reminder for these weak brethren.

7. Can you explain the apparent contradiction between Hebrews 11:13 and 11:17?

8. In what way did Abraham receive Isaac from the dead?

4. Moses' Choice (Heb 11:23-29)

Another ancestor is cited as parallel to the readers' predicament. Just as they had chosen to leave Judaism for Christ and are presently suffering for it, even so Moses chose to "*suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin*" (11:25). Moses had at his disposal all the power, prestige and privileges of royalty yet abandoned them "*esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward*" (11:26). Like Noah who "saw" rain, and Abraham who "saw" Canaan and a resurrected son, and Joseph who "saw" the eventual exodus from Egypt, Moses "saw" spiritual reality through his faith in God: "*he endured as seeing Him who is invisible*" (11:27). God has always challenged men to "see" through the medium of faith, to accept the reality of His existence, the resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell and other truths lying beyond our senses. This expectation has always remained constant regardless of the specific covenant in force.

9. How did faith preserve Moses' life as an infant?

10. What does faith understand about sin?

11. How did Moses' faith figure in the exodus?

5. The Great Feats of Faith (Heb 11:30-40)

The author enumerates specific examples of faith (Heb 11:30-32), then notes general accomplishments of faith (11:33-35a) and finally chronicles occasions of suffering experienced by the faithful (11:35b-38). Undeniably, God's people have done the seemingly impossible, radically changing the face of the world. Unfortunately, God has also allowed unimaginable hardship to befall them. Of such "*the world was not worthy*" (11:38), and they endured "*that they might obtain a better resurrection*" (11:35). This most notable chapter on faith in God is an exhortation which says to all who read, "Others have done it. You can do it, too!" We must aspire to such courageous, steadfast faith.

12. What is remarkable about these acts of faith according to Hebrews 11:39?

13. What do Christians and these ancient saints have in common (Hebrews 11:40)?