**Hebrews 11: Living by Faith**

Background;

Audience of Hebrews: 2nd generation Christians who have done great things, but are tempted to be weary of the fight.

Hebrews 10:32-35 Remember those earlier days… . You stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering.

v. 35 Do not throw it all away.

Summary of Hebrews:

Jesus is amazing, spectacular, incredible….

1. Greater than all the prophets. Hebrews 1:1-3

2. Greater than the angels. Hebrews 1:4-14

3. Greater than Moses. Hebrews 3:1-5

4. Jesus the Great High Priest. Hebrews 4:14-5:10

5. The Priesthood of Melchizedek (and therefore of Jesus) is greater than the priesthood of Aaron Hebrews 7:1-28

6. Jesus is greater than Abraham 7:1-9

7. The Old Covenant foreshadows the much greater New Covenant Hebrews 8:1-13

8. The earthly Tabernacle foreshadows the much greater heavenly Tabernacle (the one where Jesus is now) Hebrews 9:1-11

9. The Old Covenant sacrifices were a pale foreshadow of the much more effective New Covenant sacrifice. Hebrews 9:12-10:18

Therefore… Admonitions

1. Pay attention! Hebrews 2:1-18

2. Make every effort. Persevere. Don’t fall in the desert. Hebrews 3:6-4:13

3. Grow up. Mature. Take it higher Hebrews 5:11-6:20

4. Live by faith. Hebrews 10:19-12:29

Summary of the end of Hebrews 10; Let us not be of those who “draw back and are destroyed” but rather let us have faith and obtain life.

**The key to perseverance is faith!!!!!**

Hebrews 11 Heroes in the faith as examples for us.

Heb 11:1 The definition of faith. Q: What is faith?

One person said to me recently. Why are you so into proving the Bible. Faith without evidence is better than faith with evidence. Faith with evidence is really not faith at all. A bad definition!!!

Heb 11:1 Faith, ultimately, comes down to things we cannot see. We cannot see our salvation, we cannot see heaven, we cannot see hell.

Faith in Jesus and in the inspiration of the Bible is supported by much evidence, but in the end, there is always a huge aspect of “things we cannot see.”

Faith requires that we deny our senses. This is not easy.

In many ways, success is the enemy of true faith. We can see success.

The point of Hebrews: v. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

Look at these men and women. By faith they denied worldly pleasures, fame and fortune: all for things they could not see.

Why were these men and women commended? Why are they heroes of the faith? They refused what the world calls greatness and staked everything on God. They refused to be deterred by what is seen.

We have something so much greater. We see so much more. How can we deny the faith?

Example: Paul Phil 3:4-9 I consider it all rubbish in order that I might know Christ.

Example: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego vs. Nebuchadnezzar.

What could they see? A crowd of tens of thousands, the most powerful ruler in the entire earth and a firey furnace.

What did they choose to believe? That God could save them from the flames, but even if he does not… Daniel 3:16-18

v. 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious…

Consider their faith and measure yours. We have so much more than they had.

Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command. What is seen was made out of what is unseen.

(it is cool that we now have this based on scientific evidence)

His point: What is unseen is greater than what is seen, because it (what is unseen) created what is seen. Therefore, let us focus on what is unseen: God.

Illustration: Quoc Hung plants church in Hanoi.

1. By faith Abel... A faithful sacrifice. Why “better” than Cain? We do not know, but we know that his faith was an issue. A “faithful” sacrifice is one we do for God, not for gratification or for praise of men.

He speaks even though he is dead. I don’t know about you, but I want my legacy to count. How can that happen? By faith!!!! By doing thing which you can only do because of faith.

How are you doing in that arena?

2. By faith Enoch... We know almost nothing about him, except that he pleased God? How, by believing that his reward comes from God, not from men or from himself. Hebrews 11:6

Q: **Do you really believe that your reward comes from God?**

Q: How would you know if someone really, at the heart level, believed that their reward comes from God? (not seeking praise of men, etc.)

3. By faith Noah… the key thing “when warned about things not yet seen” (v. 7) The equivalent for us is the Second Coming and Judgment Day (2 Peter 3:3-9)

The point: If you look at visible things, you will turn back and lose your faith in God. We need to see things which cannot be seen.

Think about Noah building that ark. That took amazing faith. And Noah had so much less reason to be faithful than we!!!!!!!

Noah preached 100 years. Success? Zero! Where was the fruit?

The result: Heaven!

Us; use your gift to build a ministry through which people in the world can be saved.

4. By faith, Abraham… 11:8 By faith Abraham left… Why? Because of faith in something he could not see. He did not even know where he was going. (a typical male idea of a vacation) The Promised Land, both as type and as antitype. Remember, faith is believing God’s promises. (2 Cor 1:20)

This is a wonderful type of our leaving, following Jesus, and making it to heaven. The difference is we know where we are going (by faith)

Are you ready for the Christian adventure?

By faith, Abraham became a father.

In two senses, he became a father by faith:

1. Literally. It was humanly impossible for Sarah to give birth, yet Abraham believed. (Abram and Sarai laughed at first. Your faith can grow)

2. Figuratively (ie as a prefigure)

Romans 4:16-17 He is the father of us all. A great prefigure.

Abraham paved the way. Let us follow in his path;

He is the pioneer Heb 12:1

a. out of Ur. (out of sin)

b. to Mt. Moriah. (the sacrifice of Jesus)

Also note 11:19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise Isaac. A reasoned faith and a deep, unfathomable faith. No wonder he is the father of us all.

As Chrysostom put it: “The things of God seemed to fight against the things of God, and faith fought with faith, and the commandment fought with the promise.” Yet Abraham, in faith, obeyed the command.

What is it you are not willing to give up to God? God is calling you to sacrifice it.

The key to Hebrews 11 (in my opinion)

11:13 All these people were **still living by faith** when they died. They made it!

The challenge to us. They saw it only from afar (by foreshadows and prefigures), yet they were willing to become aliens and strangers.

Q: have you been thinking about returning to the country from which you left?

Q: Are you willing to consider yourself what you are as a follower of Jesus? You are an alien and a stranger. This world is not my home.

*Xenoi* stranger, alien, refugee. We get Xenophobic hatred of foreigners from this.

*Parepidemos* a temporary resident. Staying in a hotel, not a home. A guy with a green card. No roots, no permanent place.

Illustration: Girl in Chungdu, China, committed to the “community”

“The world is a bridge. The wise man will pass over it but will not build his house on it.”

While they [Christians] dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians as the lot of each is cast, and follows the native customs in dress and food and other arrangements of life, yet the constitution of their own citizenship, which they set forth, is marvelous and confessedly contradicts expectation. They dwell in their own countries but only as sojourners; they bear their share in all things as citizens and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign…. Their existence is on Earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men, and they are persecuted by all.

Citizens of the Kingdom of God are aliens and strangers in this world.

“To live in the shadow of the second coming is to take seriously the ethic of Jesus. The peculiarity of disciples is not that they wear quaint clothing or don’t use modern technology. Rather their strangeness is located in their embrace of an ethic the world considers nonsense.” [Kingdom Come Hicks and Valentine]

Phil 3:20 Our citizenship is in heaven.

“We live as if the future is already present.”

2 Peter 3:13 We are looking forward to a new heaven and earth.

v. 15 you can always go back!

v. 16 but God has a better country prepared for you. Heaven.

All this is foreshadowed in the wanderings of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons.

5. By faith Moses…. Moses gave up fame and fortune—things given to him by God!

Vs. 25-26 hints of persecution to come to the Hebrews.

Vs. 27 he persevered because **he saw him who is invisible**.

The things of the world are visible. The things of God are not. Can you deal with that?

Moses gave up **everything** the world valued. Why? Because he wanted people to enter the Promised Land.

To him, disgrace with God’s people was more valuable than all the treasures in Egypt.

Q: How about you?

Moses and God’s people became sojourners when they passed through the sea, as we, when we are baptized.

11:30 By faith, the walls of Jericho fell. Can you imagine marching around that city 13 times? Willing to look foolish.

Heb 11:32-38. Insignificant people did amazing things, who faced overwhelming odds and made it to heaven. How? By faith, of course.

A couple notes:

Shut the mouths of lions: Daniel

Quenched the fury of the flames: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

Look at Daniel 3:16-18. …but even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you set up.

Did they expect to be saved from the flames?

THIS is the definition of faith!!!

Escaped the edge of the sword: Elijah?

Women received back their dead: Elijah (1 Kings 17:17) Elisha (2 Kings 4:8)

Stoned: Zechariah 2 Chron 24:20-22

Sawn in two. Isaiah? (a legend of the Jews)

Put to death by the sword, etc. 1 & 2 Maccabees

Read 2 Maccabees 7:1-41

Vs. 39 None of them received what was promised in their life. None!!!

We do (at least in a sense) as we are saved.

Vs. 40 If they are saved at all, it is only with us.

So what excuse do we have for wavering in our faith