

Faith: the conviction of things not seen

Hebrews 11:1 – 12:3

1

Lord's Supper at Crossway

- To guide our celebration of the Lord's Supper, we focus on different emphases of the Gospel each time we celebrate this meal. From these different emphases, our service will be a bit different each month. These parts are:
 - The holiness of God
 - The reality of sin
 - The grace of God to rescue us from our sin
 - The call to receive this grace by faith
 - The call to respond to grace through mission and action
 - The hope of the new heavens and new earth for those in Christ

2

Invisible, yet real

- What is something that is invisible and yet real?
- How do some invisible things influence our lives?
 - How can you tell someone is in pain?
 - ...or in love?
- Our spiritual lives are invisible, yet real...
 - What is faith? How does it influence our lives?
 - What invisible promise of God do you find difficult to believe? Or maybe God?
 - Prayer

3

The Letter to the Hebrews

- Unidentified author
- Date: about 50 - 70 A.D.
- Audience: Jewish Christians (Hebrews) who believe in Jesus, but are in danger of turning away from faith
- Theme: Christ is 'better' than anything or anyone—even God's priests, rituals, and work in the past—so any reader should hold onto faith and true peace found in Christ

4

Why chapter 11?

Hebrews 10:23,39 - “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.... we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.”

Hebrews 11

What does it mean to ‘live by faith’?

Hebrews 12: 1-2 “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

5

Hebrews 11:1-3

¹ Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were commended for. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible

6

Hebrews 11:1 – 3 ... What is faith?

Faith is ‘seeing’ what is invisible, beyond human senses, with certainty. And God applauds it!

- Seeing organs: Eyes → see visible; Faith → ‘sees’ invisible
- Sees realities that have no physical evidence, but that are not any less real because of that
- No certainty apart from faith; but faith gives genuine certainty
- Creation: example of visible things made from invisible
- God commends faith, ancient and contemporary!

7

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.
Genesis 1:1

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?

Romans 8:24

8

Hebrews 11:4-7 - The faith of people before the Flood

⁴ **By faith Abel** brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

⁵ **By faith Enoch** was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

⁷ **By faith Noah**, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

9

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him **must believe that he exists** and that **he rewards those who earnestly seek him**.

Two aspects of faith...

- **Assent to certain truths** + **trusting in a person**
- Revelation: God has revealed truths + presented himself
- Over/underemphasizing either aspect distorts our understanding and experience of salvation

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Themes in Hebrews 11

- ‘seeing’ what is invisible
 - beyond human senses
 - with certainty
- assent to certain truths (God’s revealed promises)
- trust in a person (obedience to the call of the one they could not see)
- delayed gratification: enduring hardship, often society’s rejection, in order to be faithful and for the hope of future reward

11

Hebrews 11:8-19 - Faith of Abraham and Sarah

⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. **⁹ By faith** he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. **¹⁰ For** he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

¹¹ And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. **¹² And so** from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

12

Hebrews 11:8-19 - Faith of Abraham and Sarah (cont)

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. **14** People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. **15** If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. **16** Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

13

Hebrews 11:8-19 - Faith of Abraham and Sarah (cont)

17 **By faith Abraham**, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, **18** even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” **19** Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death

14

Hebrews 11:20-22 – Faith of the Patriarchs

²⁰ **By faith Isaac** blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

²¹ **By faith Jacob**, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

²² **By faith Joseph**, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

15

Hebrews 11:23-31 - Faith of Moses

²³ **By faith Moses' parents** hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

²⁴ **By faith Moses**, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

16

Hebrews 11:21-31 - Faith of Israelites

29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

17

Hebrews 11:32-38 - Faith of other servants of God

32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, **33** who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, **34** quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

18

Hebrews 11:32-38 - Faith of other servants of God (cont)

35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. **36** Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. **37** They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— **38** the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

19

Hebrews 11:39-40 – The Promise of Faith

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, **40** since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

20

Hebrews 12:1-3 - Faith of Jesus

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

21

Big Idea

**Faith is confidence
that invisible God and his promises
are real and worth following,
just like pioneer Jesus,
no matter how difficult the circumstances.**

...And oh what joyful perfection awaits!

22

Hebrews 11:39-40

³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰ since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Awaiting for THE promise ~ fulfilment of God's Messiah restoring the kingdom of God on earth ~ reveals...

- 'Something better'
- Salvation is social. Believers experience salvation only as part of the whole family of God

23

Hebrews 12:1-3

- 1 Running with endurance, inspired and unhindered
- 2-3 Concentrating on Jesus
 - Pioneer = led believers in all ages; seen most clearly in the incarnation
 - Perfecter = believed completely
 - Cross = physical pain, emotional/cultural shame
 - Sat down = mission complete; authority restored
 - Consider = carefully calculate Jesus' example when facing trials

24

A learning journey

God's action	Human experience
Gives faith	Discovery/step toward/grow into faith
Grows (tests) faith	Question, doubt, hunger and thirst, hope, obey, endure
Rewards faith	Satisfaction, joy, shalom, perfection

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” Luke 22:42

Son though he was, he **learned obedience** from what he suffered ~ Hebrews 5:8

25

What if my faith is tiny?

- He (Jesus) replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”
Matthew 17:20
- Faith is a gift of God: What matters is not ‘our’ faith but our obedience to the faith gifted to us. That’s why Jesus says if you have faith like a mustard seed....
- What matters is that we say “yes Lord” with the faith that we have been given, and the rest is miraculous grace.

26

Reflection

- Whose faith inspires your faith? How so? How can you honor and celebrate God's work by appreciating that inspiration?
- What promise of God do you find difficult to believe? Why so? What or who might nurture your "*confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see*"?

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Portraits of Faith @ Crossway

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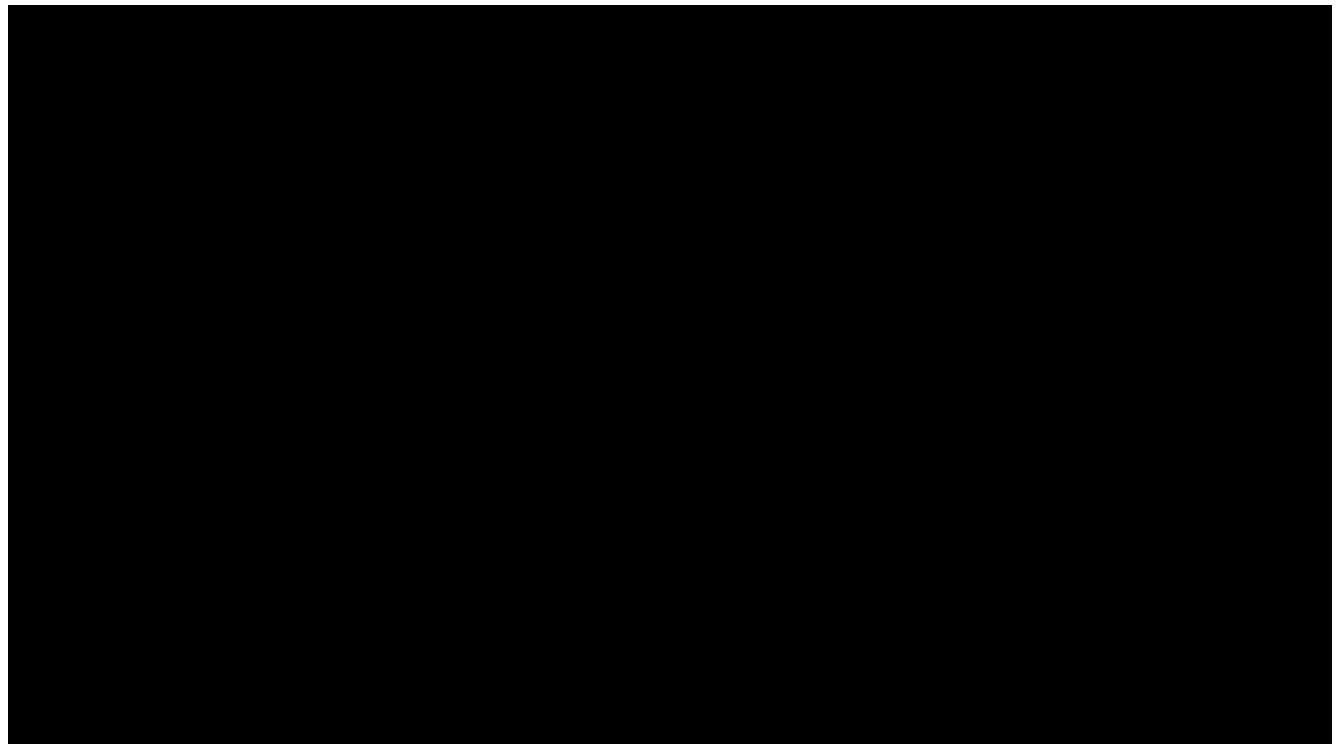
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28

Big Idea

**Faith is confidence
that invisible God and his promises
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29



30

Benediction - Hebrews 12:1-3

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.