

## A. Faith defined.

### 1. (1) A definition of faith.

**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**

a. **Now faith is the substance:** Just as our physical eyesight is the sense that gives us evidence of the material world, **faith** is the “sense” that gives us evidence of the invisible, spiritual world.

i. Faith has its reasons. The Bible doesn’t recommend a “blind leap” of faith. But the reasons can’t be measured in a laboratory; they have to be understood *spiritually*.

ii. “Faith extends beyond what we learn from our senses, and the author is saying that it has its reasons. Its tests are not those of the senses, which yield uncertainty.” (Morris)

iii. “Physical eyesight produces a conviction or evidence of visible things; faith is the organ which enables people to see the invisible order.” (Bruce)

b. **Of things hoped for... of things not seen:** If you have the substance before you or if you can see it, there is no use for **faith**. Faith is needed for what we *can’t* see and *can’t* touch.

i. Faith does not contradict reason, though it may go beyond reason. One may objectively prove the Bible is the most unique book ever published and has impacted society more than any other book. But only faith can *prove* that the Bible is the *Word of God*. Therefore, this is a belief *beyond* reason but not in *contradiction* to reason or *against* reason.

c. **Faith is the substance... the evidence:** Faith is *not* a bare belief or intellectual understanding. It is a willingness to trust in, to rely on, and to cling to.

### 2. (2) Faith enabled people in the past to overcome.

**For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.**

a. **For by it the elders:** The great examples of godliness all had different circumstances and personalities, but they all had one thing in common – faith.

b. **Obtained a good testimony:** These Jewish Christians were discouraged and thought of giving up on Jesus and a distinctive Christianity. They needed **a good testimony**, and so they needed these examples of faith to break them out of discouragement.

### 3. (3) Faith gives understanding regarding the invisible world.

**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.**

a. **By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word:** This happened when God simply commanded, “*Let there be light*” (Genesis 1:3). As the Psalmist explained: *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth... For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.*” (Psalm 33:6, 33:9)

b. **By faith we understand:** We did not see this act of creation; we only know of it by **faith**. We also know this by *reason*, because we know the world was created and created by an intelligent Designer. Again, this is faith going *beyond* but not in *contradiction* to reason.

i. Even in times when it seems God expects a faith that contradicts reason, closer examination reveals He does not. For example, it might seem contrary to reason for God to expect Abraham to believe that Sarah’s dead womb could bring forth a child. But it is not unreasonable to believe that the God who created life and the womb could do this, and that He would do it according to His promise.

c. **By faith we understand:** This text *does not* say that God created the world *with* or *by* **faith**. Since God sees and knows all things, “faith” in a human sense does not apply to Him. Since we understand faith as *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*, we know that God sees everything and does not “hope” for anything.

d. **So that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible:** Most scientists at the time the Book of Hebrews was written believed the universe was created out of existing matter, not out of nothing. They believed the world was made out of **things which are visible**. But the Bible corrects this misunderstanding, clearly saying that the world was **not made of things which are visible**.

## **B. Faith at the beginning of man’s history.**

### **1. (4) Abel’s faith.**

**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.**

a. **By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice:** The difference between the sacrifice of Cain and the sacrifice of Abel (Genesis 4:3-5) was not between animal and vegetable. The difference was that Abel’s sacrifice was made **by faith**.

i. “Abel’s sacrifice was preferred to his brother’s for no other reason than that it was sanctified by faith; for surely the fat of brute animals did not smell so sweetly, that it could, by its odour, pacify God.” (Calvin)

b. **God testifying of his gifts:** It is likely that God testified of His pleasure with Abel’s sacrifice by consuming it with fire from heaven, as happened at the dedication of the tabernacle (Leviticus 9:24), the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1) and upon offerings made by David (1 Chronicles 21:26) and Elijah (1 Kings 18:38).

c. **Through it he being dead still speaks:** Right off with his example of Abel, the writer reminds us that faith is not necessarily rewarded on earth. But God Himself testifies to the righteousness of the faithful. Abel’s blood still speaks to us, reminding us of the value of eternity.

## 2. (5-6) Enoch’s faith.

**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. 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.***

a. **By faith Enoch:** Enoch is one of the mystery men of the Old Testament being mentioned only in Genesis 5:21-24 as the man who *walked with God and he was not, for God took him.*

i. Many Jewish and Christian traditions make Enoch the recipient of some spectacular and strange revelations. Jude recognized him as a prophet (Jude 1:14-15). But the value of other prophecies attributed to him is uncertain at the very best.

b. **By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death:** The writer to the Hebrews assumed that only a man of faith could enjoy close communion with God. Obviously, anyone who had this kind of fellowship with God must have pleased God, and in pleasing God, Enoch fulfilled the purpose for which man was created (Revelation 4:11).

c. **But without faith it is impossible to please Him:** This is the basic faith required of any who seek God. One must **believe that He is**, and one must believe **He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him**. We must believe that God is there, and that He will reveal Himself to the seeking heart.

i. The writer to the Hebrews didn’t say that it is *difficult* to please God without faith. He said that it is **impossible**.

ii. “These two elements seem most simple, but, alas, how many professing Christians act as if God were not living; and how many others, though seeking after Him, are not *expecting from Him as Rewarder!*” (Newell)

### 3. (7) Noah’s faith.

**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.**

a. **Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen:** Noah was warned of something that had never happened before. His faith was shown in not merely agreeing that the flood would come, but in doing what God told him to do regarding the flood – he was **moved with godly fear**.

b. **Prepared an ark:** Real faith will always *do* something. The book of James repeats this theme over and over again.

c. **He condemned the world:** We shouldn’t think that Noah was a man who preached sermons of condemnation to the world. Instead, the mere conduct of the godly, without any preaching at all, can feel like condemnation to the world.

## C. Faith in the life of Abraham and the Patriarchs.

### 1. (8) Abraham’s obedience by faith.

**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.**

a. **By faith, Abraham obeyed:** Abraham did step out in faith, going to the place God promised him; but his faith was less than perfect. This is seen by comparing Genesis 12:1-5 with Acts 7:2-4, where it is evident that Abraham first went half way to where God called him, and only *eventually* obeyed completely. Yet thousands of years later, God did not “remember” the delayed obedience, only the faith.

### 2. (9-10) Abraham’s sojourning life of faith.

**By faith he 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.**

a. **By faith, he dwelt in the land of promise:** Abraham lived as a “sojourner” in the land God promised, never owning any of it except the plots that he and Sarah were buried on. **Dwelt** translates the ancient Greek word *paroikos*, describing a “resident alien” – one who lives at a certain place, but doesn’t have permanent status there.

i. A resident alien or a sojourner is evident. The way they talk, the way they dress, their mannerisms, their entertainment, their citizenship, and their friends, all speak of their native home. If someone is the same in all these areas as the “natives,” they are no longer sojourners – they are permanent residents. Christians shouldn’t live as if they were permanent residents of planet earth.

b. **Dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob:** Because they had no permanent home, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in **tents** instead of houses. They looked forward to a better city – **the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**

### 3. (11-12) Sarah’s faith and its results.

**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.**

a. **By faith Sarah:** Sarah’s faith was not perfect. She first laughed in unbelief (Genesis 18:9-15) and then she learned to laugh in faith (Genesis 21:6).

b. **Because she judged Him faithful who had promised:** Faith comes down to judging that God is faithful and able to keep His promises. It was this faith that enabled Sarah to **receive strength to conceive seed.** God gave the strength, but Sarah received it by faith.

c. **Were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude:** Because of the faith of Sarah and Abraham, thousands – even millions – of descendants were born. Their faith had an impact on more lives than they ever dreamed of.

### 4. (13-16) What the faith of Abraham and Sarah teaches us.

**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 that *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.**

a. **These all died in faith, not having received the promises:** The promise of the Messiah was made to Abraham and Sarah, and they believed the promise. Yet they **died** having never received it, only seeing it **in faith**.

i. They **saw the promises afar off**, willing to look at and consider the promise of God, even though the fulfillment seemed so far away.

ii. They **were assured of them**, carefully considering the promise, assured that the promise was valid because *God* made the promise.

iii. They **embraced them**, taking the promise and embracing it in faith. Abraham and Sarah probably thought many times a day about the son God promised them and these many times they **embraced** the promise. “*The saints ‘embraced’ the promises.* The Greek word signifies ‘salutes,’ as when we see a friend at a distance.” (Spurgeon)

iv. They **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims:** Abraham and Sarah always took the promise with the understanding that this world was not their home. They knew God had a better and more enduring home for them in heaven.

v. If these examples of faith endured through difficulty and discouragement without **having received the promises**, then we who *have* received the promises have even more reason for endurance.

vi. **These all died in faith:**

· They did not need to seek faith on their deathbed. They **died in faith**.

· Though they did have faith, they did also die. We do not have faith to escape death, but to die **in faith**.

· They never went *beyond* faith and “grew beyond” simple dependence on God.

· They never went *below* faith or lost faith.

b. **They seek a homeland... they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country:** Living by faith is easier when we remember that this world is not our home. It is easier when we remember that on this side of eternity, not everything is settled and not every wrong is righted. That is why they **seek a homeland** and a **better... heavenly country**.

i. Faith is very difficult when we live as “practical atheists.” This describes someone who may have a theoretical belief in God, but the belief doesn’t *matter* in what they do from

day to day. When we remember there is a spiritual reality – a heavenly home that is our real home – faith is much easier.

ii. The great theme of modern times is *naturalism*, the belief that only what can be found and measured in nature is “real.” Scientists and educators who trust in naturalism may be content to let us believe in God, just as long as we agree that God is a fairy tale – someone not *real*. But when we believe in the *reality* of God and of heaven and of His word, it is completely unacceptable to those who live by naturalism.

iii. H.L. Mencken said faith is the “Illogical belief in the occurrence of the impossible.” This would only be true if there is no God or if He does not matter. Since God *is* and since He *does* matter, faith is entirely logical.

c. **Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God:** For those courageous enough to believe in God, and to believe in Him as *real*, and heaven and eternal life as *real*, **God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.**

i. We often consider the idea that we should not be ashamed of God, but we must also consider that we may make God ashamed of us. When we do not regard God and heaven and eternity as real, there can be a sense in which God is **ashamed to be called our God.**

**5. (17-19) Abraham’s faith was great enough to know God was able to raise the dead, and that God was able to keep His promises.**

**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,” concluding that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.**

a. **By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac:** The verb tense for **offered up** indicates that as far as Abraham was concerned the sacrifice was complete. In his will and in his purpose he really did sacrifice his son.

b. **Offered up his only begotten son:** Though Abraham had another son (Ishmael, the son of his fleshly attempt to fulfill God’s promise), God did not recognize the other son (Genesis 22:1-14) – so Isaac could be called **his only begotten son.**

c. **Accounting that God was able:** The ancient Greek word translated **accounting** means just what it sounds like in English. It is a term from arithmetic expressing “a decisive and carefully reasoned act.” (Guthrie) This means that Abraham calculated God’s promise worthy of confidence.

d. **From the dead, from which he also received him:** As far as Abraham was concerned, Isaac was as good as dead and it was from the dead that he received him back, in a manner that prefigured the resurrection of Jesus.

i. Bruce wonders if this is not the incident that Jesus referred to in [John 8:56](#) when Jesus said: *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad.*

ii. When Abraham was confronted with a promise and a command from God which seemed to contradict each other, he did what we all should do: he obeyed the command and let God take care of the promise. God was more than able to do this.

## 6. (20) Isaac's faith.

### **By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.**

a. **By faith Isaac blessed Jacob:** Isaac was really in the *flesh*, not in **faith**, when he first intended to bless Esau instead of Jacob. He wanted to bless Esau with the birthright for carnal reasons. He liked Esau as a more "manly" man, and he liked the wild game he brought home. Instead he should have chosen Jacob, whom God chose.

b. **By faith Isaac blessed:** Yet Isaac came to the place of **faith** when he discovered that he had actually blessed Jacob instead of Esau. [Genesis 27:33](#) says, *Isaac trembled exceedingly. When Isaac trembled exceedingly, he was troubled because he knew that he had tried to box God in, to defeat God's plan, and that God beat him. He realized that he would always be defeated when he tried to resist God's will, even when he didn't like it. And he came to learn that despite his arrogant attempts against the will of God, God's will was glorious.*

c. **By faith:** The **faith** in Isaac's blessing came in after Isaac's attempt to thwart the will of God was destroyed, when he said of Jacob, *and indeed he shall be blessed* ([Genesis 27:33](#)). Isaac knew that his weak attempt to tell God what to do was defeated, and he responded in the faith that said, "Okay God, You win. Let Jacob be blessed with the birthright, and let Esau be blessed after him in his own way."

## 7. (21) Jacob's faith.

### **By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.**

a. **By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph:** Jacob led a rather carnal life. Yet his faith could also look beyond death – and he blessed each of his sons.

b. **And worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff:** Jacob had to lean **on the top of his staff** because he was given a limp many years before when God confronted him at Peniel (Genesis 32:24-32). As he leaned on his staff he remembered that God was great and held his future and the future of his descendants. Therefore he **worshipped**, demonstrating his faith and dependence on God.

## 8. (22) Joseph's faith.

**By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.**

a. **By faith Joseph:** Joseph **made mention of the departure of the children of Israel** in Genesis 50:24, when he said: *God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.* He knew God's promise was true!

b. **Gave instructions concerning his bones:** When Joseph died he was never buried. His coffin laid above ground for the 400 or so years until it was taken back to Canaan. It was a silent witness all those years that Israel was going back to the Promised Land, just as God had said.

i. "The Holy Spirit in this chapter selects out of good men's lives the most brilliant instances of their faith. I should hardly have expected that he would have mentioned the dying scene of Joseph's life as the most illustrious proof of his faith in God... Does not this tell us, dear brethren and sisters, that we are very poor judges of what God will most delight in?" (Spurgeon)

c. **By faith Joseph:** Joseph's faith testified for years after his death. All during that time, when a child of Israel saw Joseph's coffin and asked why it was there and not buried, they could be answered, "Because the great man Joseph did not want to be buried in Egypt, but in the Promised Land God will one day lead us to."

## D. Faith in the nation of Israel.

### 1. (23) The faith of Moses' parents.

**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.**

a. **By faith Moses... was hidden three months by his parents:** Moses' parents showed faith when they perceived that he was specially favored by God they took measures of faith to save his life despite danger.

b. **They were not afraid of the king's command:** When the Pharaoh of Egypt commanded the murder of Hebrew children **faith** gave Moses' parents the courage to obey God instead of man.

## 2. (24-26) The faith of Moses in Pharaoh's court.

**By faith Moses, when he became 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.**

a. **Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter:** Moses showed faith when he let God chart his destiny instead of allowing Pharaoh or raw ambition to do it.

b. **Choosing rather to suffer affliction:** This choice had consequences. Moses knew that to go God's way meant to **suffer affliction** rather than **to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin**. Sin does have its pleasures; but Moses properly saw them as passing, even if they should last our entire *earthly* life.

c. **The reproach of Christ:** Moses probably didn't know it at the time but the persecution he suffered for his choice of serving God and His people put him in the company of Jesus – who suffered to set men free.

## 3. (27) The faith of Moses when he left Egypt.

**By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.**

a. **By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king:** Moses' natural eyes could see the danger from Pharaoh, and he understood the danger in remaining anywhere near Egypt. Yet his eye of faith could see **Him who is invisible**, and he understood that God was a greater fact in his situation than an angry Pharaoh was.

## 4. (28) Moses showed faith when he led Israel in the Passover, in obedience to God's command.

**By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.**

a. **By faith he kept the Passover:** It took faith to believe that the blood of a lamb on the doorpost would save a household from the terror of the angel of death. But Moses had that faith and led the nation in observing **the Passover**.

b. **Lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them:** Those who did not share the **faith** of Moses and obedient Israel found their firstborn sons **destroyed** at that first Passover. They did not trust in the blood of the Passover Lamb.

## 5. (29) The faith of the nation of Israel when crossing the Red Sea.

**By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land*, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.**

a. **By faith they passed through the Red Sea:** The difference between the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and the Egyptians who followed them was not courage, but faith.

b. **The Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned:** The Egyptians had as much (or more) courage than the Israelites, but not the same **faith** – and they each had different fates. The Israelites **passed through** and the Egyptians **were drowned**.

## 6. (30) The faith of the nation of Israel when circling around Jericho as God had commanded.

**By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.**

a. **By faith the walls of Jericho fell down:** At Jericho, the people of Israel had a *daring* faith. There was no turning back, having already crossed the river Jordan at flood stage, which cut off any line of retreat.

b. **After they were encircled for seven days:** At Jericho the people of Israel had an *obedient* faith. They did not really understand what God was doing, yet they obeyed nonetheless.

c. **After they were encircled for seven days:** At Jericho the people of Israel had a *patient* faith. The walls did not fall down for the first six days, yet they kept marching as God commanded.

d. **For seven days:** At Jericho the people of Israel had an *anticipating* faith. They knew God would act on the seventh day when they shouted.

## 7. (31) The faith of Rahab.

**By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.**

a. **By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish:** Joshua 2 tells us of **Rahab**, who might seem an unusual example of faith. Yet her willingness to become a traitor to the gods of Canaan and to identify with Yahweh with His people despite the cost is worthy of praise.

i. “She was a harlot, a woman that was a sinner, and universally known to be such. Desperate attempts have been made to find some other meaning for the word rendered harlot, but they have been utterly fruitless.” (Spurgeon) Spurgeon described Rahab’s faith like this:

- Saving faith.
- Singular faith.
- Stable faith.
- Self-denying faith.
- Sympathizing faith.
- Sanctifying faith.

b. **When she had received the spies with peace:** When the Hebrew spies came to Rahab, she declared *He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath* (Joshua 2:11). This was proof of her faith. It was not strong faith and it was not perfect faith, but her faith was commendable nonetheless.

i. Clement of Rome, the earliest Christian writer outside of the Bible, was the first to see a symbol of the blood of Jesus in the scarlet cord that Rahab set outside her window (Joshua 2:18).

## 8. (32) Other heroes of faith.

**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:**

a. **Gideon:** He boldly destroyed idols and was mightily used of God to defeat a much larger army of Midianites (Judges 6-7). Yet he was also a man who doubted God’s word to him at first and repeatedly asked for confirmation.

b. **Barak:** He led the people of Israel in a dramatic victory over the Canaanites (Judges 4). Yet he hesitated and went forward only when Deborah encouraged him.

c. **Samson:** He was used mightily of the Lord to defeat the Philistines. Yet he never lived up to his potential, and had a tragic ending to his life after being enticed by Delilah (Judges 13-16).

d. **Jephthah:** He was used of God to defeat the Ammonites. Yet Jephthah made a foolish vow and stubbornly kept it (Judges 11).

e. **David:** The great king of Israel was a remarkable man of faith. Yet he also failed with Bathsheba and with his own children.

i. Each one of these were men of faith, yet had notable areas of failure in their life. Still, **Hebrews 11** commends their faith and lists them in the “Hall of Faith.” This shows that weak faith is better than unbelief, and you don’t have to be perfect to make it into God’s “Hall of Faith.”

## 9. (33-35a) By faith, some were victorious over circumstances.

**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.**

a. **Subdued kingdoms:** Some of these were David, Joshua, King Asa, Jehoshaphat, King Hezekiah, and King Josiah.

b. **Worked righteousness:** Some of these were Elijah, Elisha, and the other prophets in general; King Josiah also.

c. **Obtained promises:** Among these we could include Caleb, Gideon, and Barak.

d. **Stopped the mouths of lions:** These include Daniel, David, and Benaiah (one of David’s mighty men).

d. **Quenched the violence of fire:** Among these are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

e. **Escaped the edge of the sword:** David escaped the sword of Goliath and the sword of Saul, Moses escaped the sword of Pharaoh, and Elijah escaped the sword of Jezebel.

f. **Out of weakness were made strong:** Among these are Sarah, Gideon, Abraham, Esther, and King Hezekiah.

i. “Many of us may never have to brave the fiery stake, nor to bow our necks upon the block, to die as Paul did; but if we have grace enough to be out of weakness made strong, we shall not be left out of the roll of the nobles of faith, and God’s name shall not fail to be glorified in our persons.” (Spurgeon)

g. **Became valiant in battle:** Some of the many in this description are David, King Asa, and Jehoshaphat.

h. **Women who received their dead raised to life again:** The Old Testament mentions at least two who fit this description, the widow of Zarepheth and the Shunamite woman.

## 10. (35b-38) By faith, some were victorious *under* their circumstances.

**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, 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. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth.***

a. **Tortured:** This is a brutal word in the ancient Greek language. It carries the idea “to beat with a stick or a baton.”

b. **A better resurrection:** As Jesus said in John 5:29, there is a resurrection unto life *and* a resurrection unto condemnation. These worthies received the **better resurrection**.

c. **Trial of mockings:** Isaac endured the cruel mocking of Ishmael, and Samson was mocked at the feast of the Philistines.

d. **Chains and imprisonments:** Joseph was cast into prison for his faith, and the evil King Ahab imprisoned the prophet Micaiah.

e. **They were stoned:** Zechariah was stoned to death between the altar and the temple and Naboth was stoned to death by Jezebel’s henchmen.

f. **Sawn in two:** According to reliable tradition, Isaiah was killed by being **sawn in two**.

g. **Were tempted:** Among these terrible physical tortures, the writer brings up being **tempted** in the same context. Some think the text was corrupted here and the writer to the Hebrews originally wrote, “branded,” “burnt alive,” “mutilated,” or “strangled.” But for those who know the pain of temptation, it is not unreasonable to think that the writer regarded overcoming temptation as a true triumph of faith.

i. “‘They were tempted’: it does not say how. If one form of temptation had been mentioned, we should have surmised that they did not suffer in other ways, but when the statement is, ‘they were tempted,’ we shall not be wrong in concluding that they were tried in any and every form.” (Spurgeon)

h. **Were slain with the sword:** Such as the eighty-five priests murdered by Doeg, or the prophets murdered in Elijah’s day.

i. **Wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins:** Such as Elijah, who wore this kind humble clothing and did not mind the humility or the discomfort.

j. **Of whom the world was not worthy:** The world is not necessarily friendly to people of faith, and the world isn't necessarily **worthy** of them either.

i. "The despised and ill-treated group of servants of God was of greater real worth than all the rest of humanity put together." (Morris)

k. **In dens and caves of the earth:** David, Elijah, and prophets under the leadership of Obadiah were all forced to flee and hide in caves.

**11. (39-40) Conclusion: We have even more reasons for faith, more reasons to hold on to faith, than these heroes of the faith did.**

**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.**

a. **Having obtained a good testimony through faith:** Though they obtained this good testimony, they **did not receive the promise**, the testimony of the completed work of the Messiah on their behalf. If these followers of God were steadfast without receiving the promise, those who have received the promise have even more reason to continue on through trials and difficulty.

b. **God having provided something better for us:** We are **provided something better** (seeing and enjoying the completed work of Jesus on our behalf) and therefore have *much more reason* to hold on to faith, and to not let discouragement and tough times defeat us.

c. **They should not be made perfect apart from us:** The idea of **perfect** is "complete." They could not be made complete until the work of Jesus. They looked forward to Jesus and His work, we look at it from behind – and enjoy the fruit of His work.

i. "This chapter proves that the saints of all ages are essentially one. There is a link which unites them; a thrill which passes from one hand to hand around the circle." (Meyer)

ii. Their faithfulness makes our faith a little easier. The writer to the Hebrews began this chapter speaking of faith in the *present* tense: *Now faith is... By faith we understand* (Hebrews 11:1 and 11:3). The end of the chapter reminds us that faith *is* and it is for *we* who follow in the footsteps of the faithful men and women of previous ages.

iii. “It is what Christ has done that opens the way into the very presence of God for them as for us. Only the work of Christ brings those of Old Testament times and those of the new and living way alike into the presence of God.” (Morris)

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