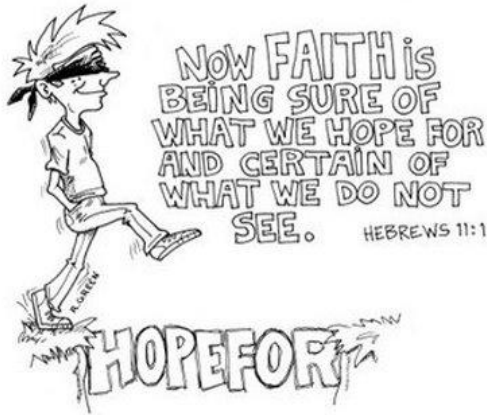


HEBREWS 11

GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE

A study at Faith Lutheran, Sharpsburg, Georgia, 2009 AD



Hebrews 11 is famously known as the “Heroes of Faith” chapter, in which we see how God’s people in the Old Testament lived by faith.

You and I are not Noah, or Abraham, or Moses, or any other of these Heroes of Faith. Yet, we all live through faith just like they did. We take the blind leap of faith, trusting solely in hope of Jesus Christ who lived, died, and has risen from the dead for us.

May our study of these Heroes of Faith strengthen our lives of faith.

THE BOOK

Author

Unknown
Options include Paul, Apollos, Barnabas...
“Who wrote the Epistle, God only knows”

Content

The superiority of Christ
Encouragement for preserving in faith
Motivation for preserving in faith

Recipients

Strongly (entirely?) Jewish
House church (Romans 16) in Rome?

Date

Quoted by Clement in 96 A.D.
Before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
Probably during Nero’s reign 64-68 A.D.

Important Passages

| | |
|---|------|
| The word of God is living and active | 4:12 |
| He sacrificed for their sins once for all | 7:27 |
| Endure hardship as discipline | 12:7 |
| Keep on loving each other as brothers | 13:1 |

THE TIMES

This letter is addressed to Christians who have become discouraged in persecution (10:32-39). They were originally doing well, but now they have become discouraged and are tempted to drift back to Judaism.

Christianity has been outlawed by Emperor Nero, while Judaism remained under state protection. The pressure to revert to the safety of Judaism would have been very real.

The author then shows that the true grandeur of Judaism, the Old Testament, is only found in its fulfillment, Jesus.

THE BACKGROUND

Chapters 1-10 show how Christ is superior. He is superior in his person over prophets, angels, and even Moses. He is also superior in his priesthood according to qualifications, office, sanctuary, and sacrifice.

The end of Chapter 10 and Chapter 11 apply these truths to believer’s lives. These chapters call Christians to draw near to God in confident faith.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Verse 6 says that God will reward those “who earnestly seek him.”

Looking at the first part of verse 6, what does someone need before they are pleasing to God?

Understanding that, what kinds of rewards can (and will!) we receive from God our Father?
2. Verse 7 speaks about the faith of Noah. What similarities do you see between the faith of Noah building the ark, and our faith as we wait for Judgment Day?
3. In what ways could we apply verses 13-16, speaking about OT believers, to current Jewish Christians suffering persecutions?
4. Verses 36 and 37 detail the tough conditions of martyrs. What comforts and encouragements could these bring to Jewish Christians?
5. Compare the commendation of verse 39 with Matthew 25:21. Why will believers receive this commendation?
6. Compare Hebrews 10:37-39 with Hebrews 11:39-40. What similarities and differences, do you find?
7. Some have commented that the book of Hebrews is sermonically in tone. Would you agree or disagree?

CONCLUSION

Hebrews 11 is appropriately titled “by faith”. The writer to the Hebrews gives us 21 specific examples of faith from the Old Testament.

No matter who they were, from Abel to Samuel, these believers held fast to the promises of God above all else.

What’s of special importance to New Testament Christians is the fact that these are Old Testament believers. They had never seen Christ, the fulfillment of all the prophecies. Men and women had put their life on the line for the promise of the Savior.

New Testament Christians have a distinct advantage. We have seen Christ through the writings of New Testament, where we see that their faith was not in vain, but Christ came and won the victory for all believers.

Yet, both OT and NT Christians face the same struggles. Both undergo persecution. For these Jewish believers, they were suffering severe persecution. You and I also suffer persecution for our faith.

May Hebrews 11 always remind us that like the Heroes of Faith in the OT, we by faith can go through our lives today with the same sure hope that they had then.

Moreover, as has now been indicated, Scripture talks about faith but does not label it knowledge such as the devil and the ungodly have. For Hebrews 11:1 teaches that faith is not a matter of historical knowledge, but a matter of having confidence in God to receive his promise. Augustine also reminds us that we should understand the word “faith” in Scripture to mean confidence in God – that God is gracious to us – and not merely such knowledge of these stories that the devils still have.

Augsburg Confession, Article XX