

# Hebrews 11

Faith

# Continuity

- The author affirms the struggles his audience has faced
  - Suffering, public affliction
- And that they endured those afflictions
- But now they need encouragement to continue
  - They must continue *in faith*
  - And faith will give them the strength to continue

# Outline

- Introduction: Faith defined
- Examples of faith 1
- Interlude
- Examples of faith 2
- Conclusion

# Faith

- A well-known definition of faith is given
  - Assurance of things hoped for
  - Evidence/conviction of things not seen
- Is this supposed to be a book definition?
  - Or more akin to a statement like “love is sacrifice”
- If this is not a book definition, why does the author bring out these specific aspects?
  - It speaks to his continued theme of the greater reality of the unseen
  - It fits with the examples he is going to use to encourage his audience
  - It speaks to what his audience needs to believe and do to hold fast to their confidence



# Creation

- Why is the first act of faith the author talks about the belief in creation?
  - It continues the theme of seen/unseen
  - Everything that is seen was made by things that are unseen

# Group 1

- The first group mentioned:
  - Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah
- These are people who are undeniably figures of faith
  - They are people who are characterized by faithfulness
    - They exhibit loyalty and devotion to God, even considering their failures
  - But they are not perfect people
- What is the significance of Abel still speaking (vs. 4)?
- What is the significance of Abraham's descendants (vs. 12)?

# Group Summary

- They died in faith
- They did not receive the things promised
- They were seeking something better than wandering
- What does the author mean that they
  - “acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles”?

# Group 2

- The author gives more examples of people who acted in faith:
  - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the people, Rahab
- What is the author's strategy for picking characters?
  - The author is going chronologically
- Now we get some mentions that are a little more questionable



# Motivation

- Joseph is said to have “made mention of the Exodus”
- Moses is said to have “considered the reproach of Christ”
- Are we to think
  - that Joseph knew about a miraculous freedom from slavery
  - That Moses knew about Jesus as God’s Messiah?

# Questionable Mentions

- What should we think about the mention of the people crossing the Red Sea?
  - This group is discussed extensively (chs. 3, 4) as an example of how not to be
- What about the mentions of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah?

# Worthiness

- The overriding moral categories in western culture are “right” and “wrong”
- What were the corresponding categories in eastern cultures?
  - “Honor” and “Shame”
- You acted in ways that were honorable
  - And avoided actions that were shameful
  - The community would shame people who were not acting honorably
- Epistles frequently use language designed to re-define things that are honorable

# Worthiness

- The section in 33-38 starts with a lot of honorable actions:
  - Conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped lions, quenched fire, escaped the sword, made strong, became mighty, put armies to flight, received back their dead



# Worthiness

- But they quickly turn:
  - Tortured, suffered mocking, flogged, imprisoned, chained, stoned, sawn in two, killed with the sword, went around in skins of sheep, destitute, afflicted, mistreated
- These are shameful things to be subjected to
- What is the conclusion about the character of these people?
  - The world was not worthy

# Conclusion

- Notice the similarities between vss. 39-40 and 13-16:

13 - 16	39 - 40
Died in faith	Commended through faith
Did not receive promises	Did not receive promises
God has prepared a city	God has provided something better for us

# Conclusion

- Remember the purpose of the letter
  - To exhort the audience to hold fast their hope and confession
  - Because what they have is better
  - Because what they have is final
- This chapter continues that theme:
  - Those people had faith in spite of not receiving promises
  - God has prepared something better for us
  - They were not to be made perfect ***apart from us***
- It also gives many examples of people in circumstances like ours who persevered in their faith