

Guided Bible Study: Week 14

June 20-26, 2020

During the time we cannot have Sunday School and Wednesday Bible Study due to the Corona Virus emergency, Rick is posting a guided Bible study on here to help fill the void left by not having those classes. We encourage you to read the passages in the Bible together with your family. We will post the study for each week.

HEBREWS, Chapter 11

The 11th chapter of Hebrews is often called the “Hall of Fame of the Faithful”. Quite a number of Old Testament characters are mentioned for their faith put to steadfast action. It builds off the platform the writer left at the end of chapter 10 when he wrote of Christians, *“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.”* (Hebrews 10.39) The actions of those mentioned in Chapter 11 move us to have such an active, steadfast faith as well.

Since the Covid-19 restrictions ended my Wednesday night Bible Study class just before we started this chapter, I decided to share commentary about it via these means. The length of the chapter and the depth of the material will cause me to take probably three weeks to cover the chapter. I hope it will bring a bit of closure for my Wednesday students but will also be of general interest for all of you since it is so applicable to our daily walk with God. As I list the verse or verses being considered, please read them in the Bible. **Since this is the second installment of the Hebrews 11 series of lessons, if you did not study the Week 13 lesson, it would likely benefit your understanding if you would go through it before launching into this one. I am simply picking up where I left off, last week.**

Hebrews 11.13: While the NIV captures the meaning OK, the NASB is more technically accurate when it reads, “All these died in faith.” Who are “all these” people? The immediate context has to do with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. Considering verses 39, however, it probably also refers to all those thus far mentioned.

What promises are referred to (“They did not receive the things promised.”)? Abraham did not live to see his descendants “as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore” (Hebrews 11.12). He never saw this seed receive an everlasting inheritance (**Read Genesis 12.7; 13.15; 15.18-21; and 17.8.**) He never saw the earth blessed through his seed. (**Read Genesis 12.3 and 22.18.**)

Jesus may throw light on Abraham's having seen the promises and having welcomed them from afar. **Read John 8.56.** "Them" must refer to promises and not to people. He had only a distant view of these promises.

Probably the most important point of this verse is that these people died in faith. Not everything God promises comes in the flesh, in this life. They envisioned that which was to come. God took care of them.

Hebrews 11.14: Just as was the case for them, we can not say this world is our own. We have this world only for a while. Heaven will last. [DISCUSS: How can seeing ourselves as strangers and aliens, and looking for "a country of our own", heaven, help us avoid sin and think spiritually?]

Hebrews 11.15: These great Old Testament characters could have returned to the land around Ur of the Chaldeans if they had wanted. To illustrate this fact, archaeologists have shown that there was an ox cart two-way rental system in this land much like Enterprise or U-Haul. They were not thinking of that former land of theirs in any positive way, however, because -most likely- they wanted no part of such an idolatrous land. They were glad to be following God in the land of His promises.

Hebrews 11.16: These heroes of the faith were more interested in heaven than in this world. That God is not ashamed to be called their God is seen in **Exodus 3.6 (read)**. When they renounced this world, considered themselves pilgrims, God claimed them. If we want God to claim us, let us do likewise.

Hebrews 11.17-19: This is one of the remarkable events in Scripture and a great picture of living in obedient faith. Human sacrifice, particularly of children, was common among the idol worship of that day. Abraham had been attracted to the one true God Who was very different from the idols. Now he was being called to do the same thing the idolatrous people did. It could have shaken his faith. Abraham did not let it.

When it speaks in verse 17 about Isaac being Abraham's "one and only son", it means he was a one of a kind son. The word in the original Greek comes from a word which in English letters is *monogene*. It means "one gene" or, in other words, a "son in a sense no other could be". Though Abraham had another son in Ishmael, only Isaac could bring the fulfillment of God's promises. (**Read Genesis 17.2 and 21.12.**) This request would, then, seem to be leaving God's promises far from fulfillment. Abraham's faith is seen in how he did not try to out-think God.

Even when it doesn't make sense God is right. People of faith obey His clearly revealed Word even when it seems it would be to our detriment. [DISCUSS: How can this principle help us with everything from generous giving to forgiving?]

Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead. This is not an after the fact assumption. **Read Genesis 22.5.** Abraham fully intended to sacrifice Isaac **and** for Isaac to return with him. There were several people raised from the dead in the Bible. This event, however, was several centuries BEFORE the first of these, in fact well over 1,000 years. Abraham had never seen or heard of a resurrection. Yet, he had such faith he believed God would raise Isaac.

Look at the account in **Genesis 22.12-18.** Abraham's obedience until God stayed his hand caused Isaac to be the same as dead. God said Isaac had not been withheld so, as far as God was concerned, Isaac was sacrificed. It was from this that Isaac was figuratively raised from the dead.

In this account God asked for the one thing Abraham couldn't re-establish, his son of promise. Abraham had such faith he did not withhold him.

Hebrews 11.20: The ability to bless, as held by several of the patriarchs (heads of households through whom God worked), was in a sense a prophecy. At the time Isaac had nothing in the land except the right of burial, yet he could say: **Genesis 27.29 (read).**

In giving God's Word to his twin sons, Jacob and Esau, Isaac distinguished between the two. He gave first place to the younger, Jacob, which meant taking away the rights of the firstborn (which was huge in their culture). Isaac, by faith, spoke the thing God desired. He refused to change the blessing. **Read Genesis 27.33.**

When you compare Esau's people, (Edom) with Jacob's (the Israelites) it shows that Isaac made a prophetic outline of the history of the two nations. Edom was quite a nation before Israel had kings. (**Read Genesis 36.31.**) Edom was independent while Israel was in Egyptian bondage. However, many years later Saul and David conquered the Edomites. (**Read I Samuel 14.47 and II Samuel 8.14.**)

Hebrews 11.21: Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were blessed by their grandfather, Jacob, in the 48th chapter of Genesis. Joseph had taken the boys to see their ailing grandfather. Jacob, in a sense at least, adopted them as sons and made them honored heads of separate and distinct tribes.

Jacob crossed his hands and put his right hand on Ephraim, the younger. Ephraim became so superior as a tribe that, years later, the northern ten tribes were often included under his name so that in a manner they did “lie down under Ephraim’s shade”.

In pronouncing the blessing, Jacob sounded as though he were lord of the land from which he was driven by famine. Faith is the only explanation for such a prophecy.

Jacob’s faith led him to worship. People of faith worship God even in their own distress.
[DISCUSS: Do you still worship God when you are going through times of distress?]

Hebrews 11.22: Joseph was one of the truly great Bible characters and one of the best. **Read Genesis 50.22-26.** As his death drew near Joseph prophesied one more time, this time about the Israelites returning to the land God had promised to his great-grandfather, Abraham. Despite having spent a number of years as arguably the second most powerful man in the world -second only to Pharaoh in Egypt which was the leading country of that day- Joseph still had his heart in the land and the matters of God and His people. He asked that his remains be carried back to Canaan. Events in Egypt kept this from happening right away. They were, however, returned there with the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. (**Read Exodus 13.19.**)

Hebrews 11.23: We often overlook Amram and Jochebed, Moses’ parents, when we think of people of faith. They, however, stood in faith against an evil edict of an ungodly ruler as did Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and various others in the Bible. By their faith, Moses’ parents saw something extraordinary about him. Despite how this is translated in some versions it seems to go deeper than his physical appearance. They had faith that God could and would use this baby in a mighty way, though it’s doubtful they could have imagined how mighty! Putting Moses into the river, although in the little ark, is not any indication of a wavering of their faith, but a further attempt to preserve his life. Their faith was mightily rewarded through Pharaoh’s daughter rescuing and raising Moses and allowing Jochebed to be his nurse.

Hebrews 11.24-25: Remember that when Pharaoh’s daughter found baby Moses in the river his sister Miriam asked if she wanted her to secure a Hebrew woman to nurse him. Thereby she secured Moses’ own mother to care for him. In Exodus, chapter 2, we learn that Jochebed took care of Moses until he was “older”. During this time she undoubtedly taught Moses about God and the Israelite heritage. Moses’ subsequent actions which resulted from faith shows the importance of teaching young children and forming their faith.

Moses was an adopted member of the royal family of Egypt. He could have had about anything he wanted of things available in that day. However, to have these things he would also had to have bought into the sinful Egyptian lifestyle. Moses knew there were hardships associated with

casting his lot with his natural people, the Israelites. However, since they were also the family of God, Moses knew the hardships were worthwhile.

Sin can be pleasurable. The Bible even says so right here. Faith like Moses' faith, however, realizes sin's pleasures are too short-lived especially when viewed against eternity.

Hebrews 11.26: How much Moses understood about Christ is debated by commentators. Certainly, the prophets did not have as clear an understanding as we do. (**Read I Peter 1.10-12.**) Moses suffered poverty -at least as compared to Egypt- and certainly a number of hardships. There were similarities between what Moses did and what Christ did in leaving heaven to minister on earth. Moreover, Moses' ministry helped to pave the way for Christ to come to earth. Whatever his level of understanding, Moses considered disgrace for the sake of Christ of greater value than the treasures of Egypt. He had such a spiritual, rather than earth-bound, approach to life because his faith caused him to look ahead to his heavenly reward. We've been talking about this in the past several verses. Keeping heaven as our goal will help us overcome sin and remain faithful.

Hebrews 11.27: The Israelites often feared because they had their eyes on the dangers and the things they were lacking. Moses didn't even fear Pharaoh and his army. When the Egyptian army approached the Red Sea the people grumbled but Moses **prayed**. In contrast to the people, Moses' faith kept his "eyes" on the invisible God.

Hebrews 11.28: Faith caused Moses to follow God's directions exactly for both the Passover feast and the sprinkling of blood on the door posts and tops. As a result the Israelites' firstborn were spared.

[DISCUSS: What kind of faith do you have? Is it as steadfast and obedient as the people we have just studied? How will you commit to living more by faith?]