

HEBREWS – LEVITICUS
“Hall of Faith – Part 5”
Hebrews 11:20-31
October 22, 2023

Hebrews 11:20-31

²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

²⁹ By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. ¹

“This is God’s Word.”

“*A faith worth emulating*” – that is what we see continually through this chapter. The preacher, writer of the book, inspired by the Holy

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 11:20–31). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Spirit, continues in his list of members of this Hall of Faith. Yet, as John Green alluded to last Sunday, suddenly there are names in the hall that may not have been first ballot inductees, at least by our estimation. This list not only shocks the readers in the first century, but for those of us who take the time to discover who these men and women listed were and what their stories were, we too may be surprised.

Yet the list continues. The writer does not give the all-inclusive list of every Old Testament hero of the faith, but the ones given are intentional and right as we seek to understand not just the history of faith, but the type of faith that we, his image-bearers and children are to have.

Sometimes, however, we may have so dumbed down what faith truly is that we find it less than overwhelming to read this list.

Nonetheless, we are taken back to Hebrews 11:1 and reminded how this belief in God, trust in God, and future-looking living is grounded on truth, his Word, and the trustworthy sovereign king.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.²

As I have read, the list of characters in this hall are interesting, if not amazing. For you and me, we are challenged, just at the first-century Christians were to believe, to trust, to have assurance of the hoped for things and to be convicted that which we cannot necessarily see is true.

Thus – the faith step.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 11:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Simply put, today's portion of scripture challenges us to have:

- 1. Faith like a Patriarch**
- 2. Faith like a Prophet**
- 3. Faith like a People**
- 4. Faith like a Prostitute**

We're all good until that last one, but hold on we will get there to see what God is revealing.

FAITH LIKE A PATRIARCH

Hebrews 11:20-22

²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.³

The biblical patriarchs when narrowly defined are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob's sons became patriarchs of their respective tribes. They were the line of men God called and used to establish the nation of Israel.⁴

Each of these men, beginning with Abraham whom we spoke of last Sunday, received a blessing and a promise. None saw the total fulfillment of such promises, though they did get a glimpse.

Isaac, the son of promise, was the living picture of resurrection. We remember his father Abraham taking him up to be sacrificed as tested by God. Abraham fully believed that God would resurrect Isaac as evidenced by his instructions to his men who traveled with him.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 11:20–22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ GotQuestions.org. "Who Are the Biblical Patriarchs?" *GotQuestions.Org*, 4 July 2011, www.gotquestions.org/biblical-patriarchs.html.

Genesis 22:3-5

³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.”⁵

The patriarch passed the test. He placed his son on the altar and was prepared to offer him to God. God then stopped him and provided a ram for the sacrifice. We know that God *could* have allowed him to complete the task and offer his one and only begotten son as a sacrifice on that altar. The faith of an old man plus the faith of a young son (who was likely stronger and faster than his old man father) is clear. Yet, that simple phrase offered to the two men who traveled with the patriarch up the hill gives insight into the belief of Abraham. “I and the boy WILL go over there and worship AND come again to you.”

As we read this Old Testament passage with 20/20 hindsight given by God’s Spirit, we see that Isaac functions as an illustration, or type of figure of the resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Abraham, so to speak, received Isaac back from the dead.⁶ Thus, that event anticipated another Father/Son moment to become clear as we read the gospel accounts.

Abraham had the faith to believe. Thus, Isaac had the deep faith to believe and trust that the promises made to his father would be fulfilled.

So too, is the reality with Jacob. Jacob who received, through deception no less, the blessing of his aged father Isaac. Jacob’s journey included steps that took him from being a deceiver to one who was deceived, from a wrestler with God, to a faithful leader of men, from a father with

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ge 22:3–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁶ Schriener, Thomas R. *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 358.

favorites, to a God-honoring old man. Three generations (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) each holding onto a promise yet fulfilled in full. These patriarchs have future-oriented faith.⁷ This patriarchal faith illustrated by these men was grounded in a timeless God, a solid promise, an unwavering truth, and looked to the future, trusting it will turn out well. Why? Because God is not a liar. God is always faithful to his promises.⁸

To have faith like a patriarch is to hold true to God's promises.

FAITH LIKE A PROPHET

“By faith...Moses...”

The next portion of this chapter, verses 23-28 gives perhaps one of the briefest synopses of the one prophet whom more stories, books, and films have been made than any other. Moses, the one who was born an Israelite in the nation of Israel. The slave who is hidden as a baby. Verse 23 states

Hebrews 11:23

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.⁹

When the author says he was hidden because he was beautiful does not mean that his cuteness overwhelmed his parents to much that they hid him. This does not refer to how cut he looked. Rather the beauty here alludes to his particular destiny. He was a beautiful child because he was set apart, even before birth, for a specific task by God – to lead his people from slavery to a land of promise.¹⁰

⁷ Schriener, 358.

⁸ Schriener, 358.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 11:23). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁰ Mohler, R. Albert, Jr. *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Christ in Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2017), 188.

But the baby was not truly the one who showed faith at that moment. It was his mother and father. Rather than fear, his parents saw the quality of their son and trusted in God.¹¹ They desired the life of their newborn to be spared as they lived in a nation where mandatory post-birth abortion (infanticide) was decreed by a king who lived in fear and did not view the life of a slave to be equal to other human beings. We often forget the nationalistic evil that was reigning in this story.

Hebrews 11:24

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,¹²

Forty years pass between what is stated in verses 23 and 24. Yet, Moses was spared. He was rescued. He was set apart. He was even adopted by the daughter of the evil king and raised with all the trappings and wealth of a prince. Yet, as stated here, by faith, believing in the God whom his parents believed, the promises given to those prior, refused to be known as the Pharaoh's grandchild, for he was a child of God's people. A man who would be called a prophet. The one who would be used by God to rescue a nation.

How could Moses turn his back on Egypt? On the delights of royalty and embrace the lifestyle of a people enslaved? The answer reveals his faith "He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." When Moses identified with Israel, he was aligning himself with the people whom Jesus Christ had been identified with from their inception. So, even before the birth of the baby in Bethlehem, as Christ is eternally God, he had always been one with his people.¹³

When the author refers to reproach of Christ, he is moving the Old Testament story into the present, for he understands what the Hebrew

¹¹ Mohler, 188.

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 11:24). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹³ Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 347.

Christians are facing. They are fearful. They are debating whether to follow Christ. Thus God is leading this author to call his people to be more like Moses, like the prophet, and to embrace suffering. Persecution is never a pleasant prospect.¹⁴ The pleasures of sin are real...but temporal. The call to have faith like a prophet is to see the bigger picture.

To have faith like a prophet is to embrace persecution.

FAITH LIKE A PEOPLE

Hebrews 11:29-30

²⁹ By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.¹⁵

The people here are the children of Israel. The ones who were previously enslaved and followed Moses from Egypt. The descendants of those who followed Joshua into battle against the Canaanites.

This is a people who escaped on defense, and then by faith went on offense. The faith of the people was revealed in the faith of the prophet Moses. His faith effected the deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea as they escaped Egyptian captivity.¹⁶

The faith to take Jericho with what humanly defined would be the most ridiculous battle plan in history (marching around the city day after day and then on one day at, when the trumpet is played, to shout resulting in a collapse of the walls surrounding the city.)

Why is this important to the first century Hebrew believers? Because they are once again enslaved. Not as their ancestors in Egypt, but under

¹⁴ Schriener, 364.

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:29–30.

¹⁶ Hughes, 350.

political and military rule by the Roman government. An overwhelmingly immoral system had overtaken their land, their people, their holy sites, and their ways of life. So, what would get them out of this updated “Egypt?” What would give them the strength to believe in what others may say is ridiculous so that eventual victory may be experienced? What? Believing in God’s word about the promise of future reward and seeing the unseen.¹⁷

The Old Testament people of God had Moses whom they followed, and was proven faithful.

They had a leader named Joshua who was continually being told by God to be “strong and courageous” and found victory over the enemies.

The people of God had a faith in God as revealed in people.

Moses was not the Messiah. Joshua was not the Son of God. Neither were Paul, Peter, Timothy, Titus, Luke, or any other first century Christian leader. Nor were any great pastors, leaders, or missionaries throughout church history. None were or are God. None were or are divine. Yet, the sovereign, divine God of the universe uses people throughout history, throughout his story, to point the way, to lead the sheep, to guide the congregation, to shepherd his church. The faith of a people is a faith in God and a trust in his chosen ones who are called to lead.

Wisdom reminds us that faith is not blind, but discerning. A faith in the person of Christ.

FAITH LIKE A PROSTITUTE

This point may cause some concern because it is not to be taken at face value. It is not just any prostitute. It is not faith in a prostitute who revels in being a prostitute, but as this passage declares, we need to have faith

¹⁷ Hughes, 353.

like a prostitute, not just any, but one who lived centuries ago in the land of biblical history. A woman named Rahab, who was instrumental in the story of God and his people.

Hebrews 11:31

³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. ¹⁸

The walls of the city of Jericho collapsed when God's people came. All but one small section. It was a section of the city where a scarlet cord hung. This cord of faith, placed by Rahab. Rahab, the prostitute who hid the Israelite spies and thus, did not perish when the judgment came.

Rahab was rescued, and so were her family members whom she kept in her residence as the attack came. As long as they remained in the room identified with the scarlet cord, safety was guaranteed.

Can you imagine how others felt when they discovered this? What about family who may have stayed in the home, but struggled to actually believe that Rahab, the one perpetually defined as a prostitute, said this was the way.

Why does this woman who makes it into God's narrative so often continue to be defined by the sinful nature of her chosen profession? Why not just Rahab? Why not Rahab the redeemed? Rahab the believer? Rahab the rescuer of family members?

Perhaps because her former title reminds all that to be a man or woman of faith is not defined by one's past. It is not defined by how others view you. It is not defined by being popular, cool, part of the in-crowd, accepted by the proper people, or more? Maybe not "prostitute" but there are many who just don't measure up to the world's manufactured standards.

¹⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:31.

So, perhaps, just maybe to have faith like a prostitute means to believe regardless how others view you?

To hold onto that which you cannot see, but have been promised through God's Word, through the way, truth, and life who is Christ, who amazingly does not expect you to meet the world's definition of acceptable before he offers you hope, redemption, and rescue.

If salvation were only for the ones whom others say measure up to ever-changing man-made standards, no one would be redeemed.

But, to believe requires faith. To know the promise maker keeps all promises. To know that if rescue is found by being under the scarlet cord, then that is what it will take.

So too, thousands of years later we find ourselves with a call to be faithful. Christians – even in the difficult times, when persecution comes, when suffering is perpetual, when it is hard to find another who leads righteously, and when no one understands what you believe, stand firm in your faith under the scarlet.

For you who are not Christians...what a joy today to know that there remains a scarlet cord for you, if you would just receive it? That red cord is the red blood of Christ shed on the cross over two-thousand years ago to pay the penalty for sin, for your sin. Paid in full. To him who has ears to hear, let him hear...and respond and receive.