

BAND of BROTHERS

SPRING SERIES 2024 – WEEK 10

Hebrews 11:17-40: Faith Focused on Something Far Better

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

– Hebrews 11:39-40 ESV

- **The faithfulness of God**

- They all heeded “the call of faith”

For by it [faith] the people of old received their commendation. – Hebrews 11:2 ESV

- God recognized **their faith** in His **faithfulness**

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus...who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. – 1 Corinthians 1:4, 8-9 ESV

...pray for us...that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one....May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. – 2

Thessalonians 3:1-2, 5 ESV

- **The key to living a life of faith:**

- Focusing on **God’s faithfulness**

- He has **promised** to be faithful
- He has **proven** to be so over time
- He has **prepared** a flawless plan
- And has a **perfectly precise** timeline

*I will proclaim the name of the Lord;
how glorious is our God!*

*He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect.
Everything he does is just and fair.*

He is a faithful God who does no wrong;
how just and upright he is! – Deuteronomy 32:3-4 NLT

*Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. **He is the faithful God** who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands. But he does not hesitate to punish and destroy those who reject him.* – Deuteronomy 9:9-10 NLT

- People of faith refuse to **reject** God
 - They **doubt** but never **deny** Him
 - They **fear** but never **fall away**
 - They **question** but never **quit**
 - They **grow weary** but don't **give up**
 - They admit **disappointment** but never **defeat**

But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved. – Hebrews 10:39 NLT

- A who's who of the unexpected and unqualified

A farmer	A pathological liar
A few shepherds	An ex-con
A prostitute	A fear-prone general
Two murderers	Former slaves
An adulterer	A guy suffering from low self-esteem
A pastor with rebellious kids	An impulsive deal-maker
A sex addict	A elderly barren wife

- Not exactly a stellar cast of super-saints

- **Faith in God's faithfulness to provide – Abel**

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. – Hebrews 11:4 ESV

- Both men gave gifts to God
 - Abel brought **the firstborn** of his flock
 - Cain brought **the fruit** of the ground

"The issue doesn't seem to be with the quality or quantity of their offerings. It doesn't appear to have anything to do with the content of their offerings. The issue was their faith. Cain gave an offering of the fruit of the ground. He most likely gave grain, dates, figs, or whatever else he had grown. But keep in mind, he gave 'the fruit of the ground.' He did not give God the tree from which the fruit grew. So, he was assured of having more fruit to replace what he had given.

“It also doesn’t say that he gave God the best of his fruit. He simply gave God a portion. And yet, of Abel it is said that he gave the ‘firstborn of his flock and their fat portions.’ In other words, Abel gave the best and he gave them permanently. He didn’t just offer them to God, he sacrificed them.

“Abel would never benefit from them. They would never breed and produce more sheep. They would not grow up and produce milk. They would never serve as food on the table for Abel’s family. He had given them to God and placed his faith in God’s faithfulness to provide.” – Ken Miller, Devotional™ Reading on Hebrews

- Abel never saw **the fruit** of his faith
 - His brother murdered him
 - But he “died in faith” (vs 13)
 - He didn’t make it to the next breeding season
 - But was commended as righteous (vs 4)
 - His life (in death) became a testimony of faith

- **Faith in God’s faithful presence – Enoch**

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. – Hebrews 11:5-6 ESV

- Enoch believed...
 - ...that God **really exists**
 - ...and He **rewards** all who seek Him
- Enoch was in the **minority**
 - He was born 57 years after Adam died
 - And 69 years before Noah was born
 - He was taken 669 years before the flood
 - He lived during an age of increasing apostasy

*The Lord saw that **the wickedness of man was great in the earth**, and that **every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**. – Genesis 6:5 ESV*

- The world was moving away *from* God
- Yet Enoch walked *with* God
 - ~ He refused to doubt God’s presence
 - ~ He relied upon God’s faithfulness
 - ~ He rested in God’s promise of reward
- And he escaped the penalty of death

- **Faith in God’s faithful power to preserve – Noah**

By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. – Hebrews 11:7 ESV

- Noah was another outlier
 - o The last righteous man on earth
 - o He alone walked with God

*Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. **Noah walked with God.** – Genesis 6:9 ESV*

*Now God saw that **the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence.** God observed all this corruption in the world, for **everyone on earth was corrupt.** – Genesis 6:11-12 ESV*

- Everyone had turned their backs on God
- Yet Noah remained **fully devoted** to God
 - o He fully understood God's anger
 - o But he counted on God's promise to save

I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you." – Genesis 6:17-18 ESV

*By faith Noah, **being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen**, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. – Hebrews 11:7 ESV*

Noah...did all that God commanded him. – Genesis 11:22 ESV

- **Faith in the faithfulness of God's word – Abraham**

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. – Hebrews 11:8-10 ESV

- Abraham was operating in a vacuum
 - o He had no previous experience with God
 - o He was given no evidence or proof
 - o So, he was "betting on the come"

betting on the come –

- you don't have what you want or need at the moment, but you bet as if you will
- hoping you will have what you want or need when the time comes

...he went out, not knowing where he was going. – Hebrews 11:8 ESV

“Abraham’s obedience, while important, takes a back seat to his faith. It is a byproduct of his faith.” – Ken Miller, Devotionary™ Reading for Hebrews

- Abraham “walked” by faith
- He lived his life according to his belief in God’s faithfulness
- **Walking** one step, one day at a time
- **Waiting** for “city that has no foundations”

- **Faith in the faithfulness of a powerful God**

By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. – Hebrews 11:11-13 ESV

- Sarah faced insurmountable odds
 - She suffered the effects of the fall: Old age and infertility
- She was damaged goods
 - Her body had **given out** on her
 - Her husband had **given up** on her
- But her God was all-knowing and all-powerful
 - His **plan** was bigger than her **problem**
 - His **power** was greater than her **pessimism**

Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?” – Genesis 18:11-12 NLT

*Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ **Is anything too hard for the Lord?** I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” – Genesis 18:13-14 NLT*

*“O Sovereign Lord! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. **Nothing is too hard for you!**” – Jeremiah 32:18 NLT*

*“I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. **Is anything too hard for me?**” – Jeremiah 32:27 NLT*

- **Faith in the faithfulness of God’s better plan** – Hebrews 11:39-40
 - A better Adam
 - A better deliverer, mediator, and covenant
 - A better high priest
 - A better sacrifice
 - A better promise
 - A better future

The Persevering Patriarchs of Hebrews 11

Character	Vs	OT Passage	Background	Outcome
Abel	4	Gen 4:1-16	Shepherd	<i>These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. – HEBREWS 11:13-16</i>
Enoch	5-6	Gen 5:21-24	NA	
Noah	7	Gen 6:8-9:29	Farmer	
Sarah	11-12	Gen 21:1-7	Barren housewife	
Abraham	8-10	Gen 12	Pagan idolater	<i>And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.</i> <i>And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. – HEBREWS 11:32-40</i>
	17-19	Gen 22		
Isaac	20	Gen 27	Wealthy landowner and heir	
Jacob	21	Gen 48	Conniving schemer	
Joseph	22	Gen 50:22-26	Ex-con and career civil servant	
Moses	23	Ex 2:1-10	Privileged member of the ruling class, but a convicted murderer, and a fugitive living in exile as a shepherd	
	24-27	Ex 2:11-22		
	28	Ex 12		
The Israelites	29	Ex 14	Former slaves turned nomadic shepherds	
	30	Jos 6:1-21		
Rahab	31	Jos 2; 6:22-25	Pagan prostitute	
Gideon	32-37	Jdg 6-8	Farmer suffering from low self-esteem	
Barak	32-37	Jdg 4	Military professional with a procrastination problem	
Samson	32-37	Jdg 16:23-31	Nazirite with a predilection for women and impulsiveness	
Jephthah	32-37	Jdg 11-12	Son of a prostitute who had been disinherited from his family	
David	32-37	1 Sam 16-31	Shepherd boy turned king who was guilty of adultery and murder	
Samuel	32-37	1 Sam 3-15; 25	Prophet and king-maker who proved to be a lousy father	
The prophets	32-37	Various	Revival preachers with no apparent converts or friends	
Others	32-37	Various	Grieving women, prisoners, the persecuted, afflicted, mocked, and martyred	

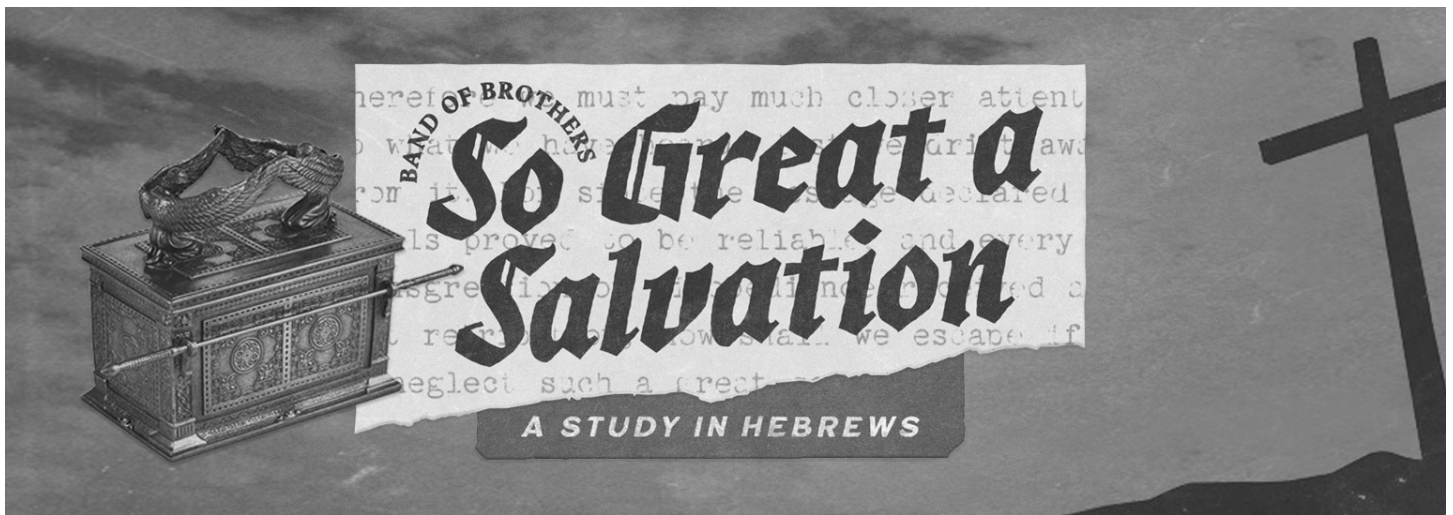
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- **Discussion questions**

What aspect of God’s faithfulness do you struggle having faith in? Where do you tend to doubt His faithfulness in your life and why?

Why should the backgrounds of these “faithful saints of old” be an encouragement to us?

How does 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 support Hebrews 11 and provide us with hope?



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SPRING SERIES 2024 – WEEK 11 HOMEWORK

WEEK 11 – Hebrews 12:1-29: Don't Grow Weary

Having visited the faith of the Old Testament saints, the author now calls on his readers to exhibit that same kind of faith amid their own set of trials and struggles. This was a call to remain steadfast in the face of obstacles and unwavering in their commitment to the promises of God. His Son had done all that was necessary to ensure the future glorification of all those who placed their faith in Him. No additional rules and regulations were needed. The old covenant had been replaced with a newer and better covenant, so there was no need to return to Judaism. The author wanted his readers to focus on the reality of the future kingdom what Jesus had died to make possible. He will one day return and set up that Kingdom on earth, where they will live in unbroken fellowship with Him and the Heavenly Father.

- Read Hebrews 12:1-29.
- Over the week, read pages 143-168 of Ken's Devotionary™ on Hebrews.
- In what way are the characters mentioned in chapter 11 a "great cloud of witnesses?" And why should their presence encourage us to "lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely" (Hebrews 12:1 ESV)?

How would thinking about the Old Testament saints with all their faults and failures help us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:2 ESV)?

Pick a few of the names listed in chapter 11 and write down how their lives modeled endurance?

- According to verse 2-6, how could looking at Jesus' life on earth encourage us in our walk of faith?

What kinds of things did Jesus do that can emulate in our own lives?

Do verses 5-6 bring you encouragement? If so, why? If they don't, what do you think the problem is?

- According to verses 7-11, what should be the byproduct or fruit of our endurance?

Why do you think we fail to recognize the loving discipline of God and how does it end up impacting our perspective on life and our view of God?

- Go back and familiarize yourself with the story of Jacob and Esau found in Genesis 27. Why do you think the author chooses this story to make his point? What do Esau's actions have to do with "inheritance" that God has in store for us?

According to verses 12-15, why is it vital that we help each other live with hope and a sense of eager anticipation as we wait for God's promises to be fulfilled?

- In verses 18-29, the author revisits the old covenant and its relationship to Mount Sinai. He describes Mount Sinai as "a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest" (Hebrews 11:18 ESV). How does he use these characteristics to differentiate the old and the new covenant?

According to verses 22-24, how has our access and relationship to God been changed by placing our faith in Jesus?

In verses 25-29, the author gives his readers a glimpse of the future. Why should this have been an encouragement to them and how is it an encouragement to you?