The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews II

The Partakers of Christ by Faith

Hebrews 11:1-40

I. UNDERSTANDING FAITH (Hebrews 11:1-3, 6)

A. The Explanation of Faith (Hebrews 11:1)

1. Popular definitions
   a. According to a modern dictionary, faith is "unquestioning belief that does not require proof or evidence." As it regards the faith found in the Bible, this is simply not true.
   b. A. A. Hodge said, "Faith must have adequate evidence, else it is mere superstition."
      (1) Faith is not the opposite of fact or of scientific knowledge.
      (2) The evidences of faith may operate differently than those of science, but they are there.
2. An acronym for faith
   a. **F**—Forsaking
   b. **A**—All
   c. **I**—I
   d. **T**—Take
   e. **H**—Him
3. The biblical usage
   a. The word *faith* is found 247 times in 231 verses. It is only found twice in the Old Testament; and the first time, it refers to those in whom there is "no faith" (Deuteronomy 32:20).
   b. However, Hebrews chapter 11, often called the faith chapter, utilizes *faith* twenty-three times in forty verses with the vast majority alluding back to the faith of Old Testament saints. Although the word *faith* was almost completely nonexistent in the Old Testament, Hebrews paints a more complete picture of faith before Christ's incarnation.
4. The biblical definition
   a. The simplistic
      (1) Many give Hebrews 11:1 as the definition for faith and leave it at that. However, one already needs a basic understanding of faith to grasp the truth set forth by this verse.
      (2) A short definition of faith could be: taking God at His word. This faith refuses information, regardless of how seemingly reliable, that deters one from fully accepting the words of God as true.
         a) It is true that our faith is in God, but we do not properly know the God we should believe in or know how to believe in Him unless He tells us in His word.

b) This is why Paul says in Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
c) Biblical faith is not an "unquestioning belief that does not require proof or evidence" (Webster's New World Dictionary).
d) FAITH accepts God's word (His promises and His warnings) as FACT and acts accordingly.
e) Since there are many evidences that the word of God is true, this is not a blind leap of faith.
f) It is rather an intelligent, holy reaction to the wondrous words of God.

b. The complex
(1) Substance
a) "Now faith is the substance"
b) Substance is the essential part or element of anything.
c) Faith is the necessary or essential part of all things "hoped for."
(2) Evidence
a) "Now faith is…the evidence of things not seen."
b) Evidence is admissible in court and serves as proof.
c) Faith, in and of itself, is the very evidence of things unseen to man.

5. The aspects of faith
a. Knowledge
(1) Faith begins with a knowledge of what it is that should be believed.
(2) For instance, if someone knows that the gospel of Christ refers to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ according to the scriptures (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-4), they have knowledge.
(3) However, it is possible for someone to know what the gospel is without believing it to be true. This is true of many unsaved people. In fact, hell is filled with people who fit into this category.

b. Assent
(1) Knowledge is not enough.
(2) The person must also believe that the object of faith is true.
(3) To reach this aspect of faith, the person must know what the gospel is (knowledge) and believe it to be true (assent).
(4) But this is still not enough for salvation.

c. Trust
(1) Trust refers to a personal commitment to and reliance upon an object of faith.
(2) In salvation, the sinner must know that Jesus died for him and rose again from the dead (knowledge) and he must accept that these facts are true (assent).
(3) However, he is still not saved until he relies on these facts as the basis for his personal salvation.

d. The aspects illustrated
   (1) Let us say that you are visiting someone's home and they ask you to sit down.
   (2) First, you look over and acknowledge that there is indeed a chair. This is knowledge.
   (3) Second, you accept the fact that you could sit in this chair and it would hold you up. That is assent.
   (4) Finally, you walk over to the chair and sit down in it. That is trust. It is in this third aspect of faith that you exercise and complete your faith.

6. The relationships of faith—On a grander scale, faith is a link in a chain that has a link before it and a link after it.
   a. **Founded** on the word
      (1) Biblical faith is not a mystical belief in God and in other principles based on inner knowledge, personal revelations, or human reasoning. It is not a leap in the dark.
      (2) Biblical faith firmly stands on the words of Almighty God.
      (3) When Romans 10:17 is distilled, it teaches us that faith comes by the word of God.
   b. **Faith**—this includes all aspects of faith already discussed.
   c. **Functions** through works
      (1) Faith is not works and works are not faith.
      (2) Salvation is by faith alone without works (Ephesians 2:8-9).
      (3) However, the natural result of genuine faith is works.
         a) Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:12).
         b) Paul referred to the "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6) and spoke to the Thessalonians of the "work of faith" (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:11). He told Titus: "these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8).
         c) James said "I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18) and "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20, 26).
         d) These passages show us works are the result of true faith.
   d. In fact, this chapter is filled with such testimonies:
      (1) "By faith Abel offered" (Hebrews 11:4).
      (2) "By faith Enoch was translated" (Hebrews 11:5).
      (3) "By faith Noah…prepared an ark" (Hebrews 11:7).
      (4) "By faith Abraham…obeyed" (Hebrews 11:8).
      (5) "By faith he [Abraham] sojourned" (Hebrews 11:9).
      (6) "Through faith…Sara…received strength to conceive seed" (Hebrews 11:11).
      (7) "By faith Abraham…offered up Isaac" (Hebrews 11:17).
      (8) "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau" (Hebrews 11:20).

(9) "By faith Jacob…blessed both the sons of Joseph" (Hebrews 11:21).
(10) "By faith Joseph…made mention of the departing" (Hebrews 11:22).
(11) "By faith Moses…was hid" (Hebrews 11:23).
(12) "By faith Moses…refused to be called" (Hebrews 11:24).
(13) "By faith he [Moses] forsook Egypt" (Hebrews 11:27).
(14) "Through faith he [Moses] kept the passover" (Hebrews 11:28).
(15) "By faith they [Israel] passed through the Red Sea" (Hebrews 11:29).
(16) "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down" (Hebrews 11:30).
(17) "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not" (Hebrews 11:31).
(18) Others "through faith subdued kingdoms" (Hebrews 11:33).
(19) Others through faith "wrought righteousness" (Hebrews 11:33).
(20) Others through faith "obtained promises" (Hebrews 11:33).
(21) Others through faith "stopped the mouths of lions" (Hebrews 11:33).
(22) Others through faith "quenched the violence of fire" (Hebrews 11:34).
(23) Others through faith "escaped the edge of the sword" (Hebrews 11:34).
(24) Others through faith "were made strong" (Hebrews 11:34).
(25) Others through faith "waxed valiant in fight" (Hebrews 11:34).
(26) Others through faith "turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Hebrews 11:34).

B. The Results of Faith (Hebrews 11:2-3)

1. The report of faith (Hebrews 11:2)
   a. A report is an account brought by one person to another.
   b. The idea of a report serves as the bookends of this chapter.
      (1) "For by it [faith] the elders **obtained a good report**" (Hebrews 11:2).
      (2) "And these all, having **obtained a good report** through faith" (Hebrews 11:39)
   c. The depth of this truth is likely yet to be discovered. Generally, a report is brought by one person to another. Yet, the scripture declares that these men **obtained** a good report. That seems more like a testimony or reputation gained. In the end, they very likely overlap. The key to a report or testimony or reputation is FAITH.
2. The understanding of faith (Hebrews 11:3)
   a. The source of understanding—faith
   b. The content of understanding
      (1) That the world**s** were framed by the word of God
      (2) That things which are seen were not made of things which do appear

(3) These phrases all by themselves exclude anyone from both believing the Bible and evolution. It either all originated with a word from the Word, or it was made of things which do appear.
(4) In the end, faith understands mysteries that baffle philosophers and scientists!

C. The Absence of Faith (Hebrews 11:6)

1. The statement of absence—"without faith"
2. The statement of impossibility—"without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please him."
   a. In the Old Testament
      (1) The Lord killed the children of Israel because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:16-19).
      (2) Christ said it was a weightier matter of the law (Matthew 23:23).
   b. In the New Testament
      (1) Christ rebuked weak faith (Matthew 6:30; Matthew 8:24-26; Matthew 14:29-31; Matthew 16:6-8; Matthew 17:15-17).
      (2) Christ praised great faith (Matthew 8:8-10; Matthew 15:22-28).
      (3) The early churches were praised for faith (Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:4; 1Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:3).
      (4) God wrote a whole chapter about labours of faith (Hebrews 11).
      (5) Without faith we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6).
3. The statement of access—"he that cometh to God"
4. The statement of necessity
   a. The existence of God—"must believe that he is"
   b. The actions of God—"and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"

II. FAITH BEFORE THE FLOOD (Hebrews 11:4-5, 7)

A. The Faith of Abel (Hebrews 11:4)

1. The work of faith
   a. The work described—"Abel offered."
   b. The work received—"unto God"
   c. The work compared—"a more excellent sacrifice than Cain"
2. The witness of faith
   a. He obtained witness that he was righteous.
   b. God testifying of his gifts
   c. By it he being dead yet speaketh.
3. Note: Consider the excellency of Abel's sacrifice.
   a. Both Cain and Abel laboured (Genesis 4:2).
      (1) Abel was a keeper of sheep.
      (2) Cain was a tiller of the ground.

b. Both Cain and Abel brought sacrifices (Genesis 4:3-4).
   (1) Cain brought of the fruit of the ground (Genesis 4:3).
   (2) Abel brought of his flock and of the fat thereof (Genesis 4:4).
c. Both seemingly brought their best (Genesis 4:4).
   (1) Abel brought of the firstlings.
   (2) The word *also* in Genesis 4:4 leads us to believe that Cain brought his best as well.
d. Both received a response to their offerings (Genesis 4:4-5).
   (1) The LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering (Genesis 4:4).
   (2) Unto Cain and to his offering he [the LORD] had not respect (Genesis 4:5).
e. So, the question must be asked, "What was the difference?"
   (1) Abel's offering was said to given "By faith."
   (2) According to the scripture, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).
   (3) This suggests that Abel offered from his heart what he did based upon something that God said.
   (4) When Cain's sacrifice was rejected, he "was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (Genesis 4:5).
   (5) According to the New Testament, Cain "was of that wicked one" (1 John 3:12).
   (6) That being said, while we focus on the outcome and type of the sacrifice, the dividing characteristic is that one man had a heart for God and by faith offered what God requested. The other man knew God's word and chose to offer otherwise. He did so because his heart was not right.

B. The Faith of Enoch (Hebrews 11:5)

1. The work of faith
   a. He was translated that he should not see death.
   b. He was not found, because God had translated him.
2. The witness of faith
   a. Before his translation, he had this testimony.
      (1) What is a testimony?
         a) Common definitions
            i) Statement of a witness
            ii) Evidence
            iii) Proof
         b) Scriptural usage
            i) God's written word
               (a) Initially, the ten commandments (Exodus 25:16, 21; Exodus 31:18; Exodus 32:15; Exodus 34:29; Exodus 40:20)
               (b) Later used to describe a larger portion of God's written word (Psalm 19:7; Psalm 78:5; Psalm

81:5; Psalm 119:88; Psalm 132:12; Isaiah 8:16, 20; 1 Corinthians 2:1) or independent commands from the Lord (Deuteronomy 4:45; Deuteronomy 6:17, 20; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 17:15; 2 Kings 23:3; 1 Chronicles 29:19; 2 Chronicles 34:31; Nehemiah 9:34; Psalm 25:10; Psalm 78:56; Psalm 93:5; Psalm 99:7; Psalm 119:2, 14, 22, 24, 31, 36, 46, 59, 79, 95, 99, 111, 119, 125, 129, 138, 144, 146, 152, 157, 167-168; Jeremiah 44:23)

ii) The ark that contained the testimony (Exodus 16:34; Exodus 27:21; Exodus 30:36; Leviticus 16:13; Numbers 17:4, 10)

iii) The item by which other things are identified

(a) The ark of the testimony (Exodus 25:22; Exodus 26:33-34; Exodus 30:6, 26; Exodus 31:7; Exodus 39:35; Exodus 40:3, 5, 21; Numbers 4:5; Numbers 7:89; Joshua 4:16)

(b) The tabernacle of testimony (Exodus 38:21; Numbers 1:50, 53; Numbers 10:11; Revelation 15:5)

(c) The tent of the testimony (Numbers 9:15)

iv) A public witness (Ruth 4:7)

v) An association with God (Psalm 122:4)

c) Practical points

i) It is a public record of what would be otherwise hidden.

ii) It is a statement for others to read or hear (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

iii) It is the defining point for everything else.

(2) God's desired use for a testimony

a) A testimony unto (Matthew 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14)

b) A testimony against (Matthew 10:18; Mark 6:11; Mark 13:9; Luke 9:5)

(3) The nature of a testimony

a) It takes work.

i) It requires outward declarations of inward righteousness—Enoch had faith in God and acted upon his faith (Hebrews 11:5).

ii) It requires consistent diligence (Hebrews 11:6).

iii) It requires circumspectness.

b) It is sealed before death (Hebrews 11:5).

i) He had this testimony.

ii) Before his translation

c) It continues after death.

i) Among men—we still believe and rejoice in Enoch's testimony.

ii) In heaven (Daniel 12:3; Matthew 13:43; 1 Corinthians 15:40-42)

d) It is easily marred.
i) Cain (Genesis 4:8; 1 John 3:12; Jude 1:11)
ii) Noah (Genesis 9:20-22)—though he had great faith and built an ark
iii) Lot (Genesis 13:12; 2 Peter 2:7-8)—though he spent many days with Abraham and tried to warn his family about judgment
iv) David (2 Samuel 11:1-5)—though he beat Goliath and was a man after God's heart
v) Samson (Judges 16)—though he was used of God against the Philistines and was a man of great strength
vi) Jonah (Jonah 1:3)—though he prayed in the whale's belly and preached to Nineveh
vii) Peter (Matthew 26:33-34; Galatians 2:11)—though he spoke profound words about Christ and preached at Pentecost
viii) Judas (Matthew 10:4)—though he preached the kingdom and healed the sick
ix) John Mark (Acts 15:37-38)—though he began in God's work and was later useful
x) Demas (2 Timothy 4:10)
(a) Though he was with Paul when Colossians was penned (Colossians 4:14)
(b) Though Paul called him a fellowlabourer (Philemon 1:24)

b. That he pleased God
(1) Although we have already covered Hebrews 11:6, it must be remembered that the absence of faith makes it impossible for one to please God.
(2) It is therefore evident that the aspect of Enoch's life that pleased God was his faith.

C. The Faith of Noah (Hebrews 11:7)

1. The word of faith—"being warned of God of things not seen as yet"
2. The work of faith
a. He moved with fear. In other words, faith preceded and produced fear. This was not an ungodly fear that countered faith. Instead, it was a fear of God that works in conjunction with faith to connect any divide between faith and fruit.
b. He prepared an ark to the saving of his house.
3. The witness of faith
a. He condemned the world.
b. He became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.
c. Note: This is the same righteousness of which Paul spoke (Philippians 3:9) and appears to the be the same missed by the Jews because they sought it by works (Romans 9:30-33).