

Lesson Fifteen — The Reward of Faithfulness

Day One — Faith to the Preserving of the Soul

Day Two — Eyes of Faith

Day Three — Looking Ahead through Faith

Day Four — Looking Ahead through Faith, con't.

Day Five — Faith Connected to the Fourth Warning

Thus far in this study we have laid the foundation for this epistle and have studied four of the five warnings the author gives to believers. We have noticed that the author writes of many comparisons which propel our gaze forward. Now we come to the chapter in the Book of Hebrews often referred as the Faith Chapter. Pray that you will come to see the very reason the Holy Spirit prompted the author to put it here. Pray, too, that you will see *how* this chapter is based upon the prior context. It is very eye-opening to see *where* this chapter fits and *why* it fits there. Have a good week of study.

Day One — Faith to the Preserving of the Soul

After praying, let's begin today by remembering the first four warnings. There is a flow to them.

The essence of the first warning is — don't drift away from what the prophets and the Lord Jesus spoke about the coming kingdom, because if you do there will be a just recompense. (A recompense exactly commensurate with the services rendered.) Second, don't miss out on *the rest* as the Children of Israel did. Rather, strive to enter the rest. Third, press on toward maturity, and if the Lord allows, you will come to a mature knowledge and understanding of the priesthood of Melchizedek, a type of the future ministry of Christ in His coming kingdom. But beware! If you come into this mature knowledge, then scorn it, you will not be brought back to repentance concerning this knowledge. Fourth, if you do press on, *the Lord having allowed* you to come to maturity — WATCH OUT — because if you sin *against this very knowledge and understanding* after coming into it, you will face a fiery judgment.

Can you see the flow here?

The author gives his readers an encouragement — he expects *better things* for them, if they but endure. That's where we ended last week. The first verse of Hebrews chapter eleven is based upon the idea ending in chapter ten. Therefore, we will begin by going back to the last day's homework of last week and review the material. After you have done that, we will pick up the text from there. Here we go.

Hebrews 10

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, 33 partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and

tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. 34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. 38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul [lit. *life*].

Go back and circle these words/phrases: *better resurrection*; *better possession*; *great reward*; and *what was promised*. Then write out the essence of vv. 35 and 36.

Based upon v. 36, are the things promised conditional or unconditional?

Then, in v. 37, the author quotes from the Old Testament, telling of the imminence of Christ's return with His reward — the positive reward is implicit, the negative reward, explicit.

And finally, another encouragement to his readers in v. 39. It is almost as if the author says, "OK. Now let's talk about the individuals *who have looked forward to these things*, displaying faith through their actions, and in doing so, have *preserved* [or saved] *their souls* [lives]" Then he gives Old Testament examples of individuals who have done just that — displayed faith to the saving of their soul (life [Heb. 11]).

Now what would the phrase mean — *faith to the preserving of the soul*? This opens up an area of understanding which must be grasped in order to understand what the author is dealing with in the upcoming chapter eleven, or in the entire book for that matter. The *preserving of the soul* has to do with the central subject matter of the Book of Hebrews. It has to do with the coming Messianic Era. It has to do with the inherited salvation, the rest out ahead, the kingdom of the heavens. (Other New Testament writers referred to this thought as *the salvation of the soul*. In fact, while the NASB has the word *preserving*, the KJV translates the word *saving*, here in Hebrews 10:39.) This Greek word, translated *preserving* in v. 39 (NASB) is *perpoiesis* <4047>, a compound word formed from *peri* (concerning) and *poieo* (to do). Combining these two words together, you would get the idea, in a literal sense, "to do something concerning."

The same word is used in other New Testament texts with the idea of *obtaining*, or *preserving*, or *possessing something*. Look at the way Paul used the word in both of his letters to the Thessalonian Church. Notice its connection to the *future salvation* (I Thess.), and the *obtaining glory* (II Thess.).

I Thessalonians 5

8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining <4047> salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...

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II Thessalonians 2

13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain <4047> the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ

Paul uses the word in his letter to the church at Ephesus:

Ephesians 1

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession <4047>, to the praise of His glory.

This may literally be translated, “...with respect to a redemption of that obtained [or that preserved]...” Notice again, that this word is in connection with *a salvation*, *an inheritance*, and *a redemption* out ahead. Underline those three words in the passage above.

The whole thought within the context of Hebrews 10:39 has to do with *salvation* — but not the salvation which we presently possess — rather, the salvation that is future. We’ve already seen over and over again throughout the Book of Hebrews that the author’s focus is on the future salvation, having to do with our inheritance and future rest in the kingdom of the our Lord Jesus Christ. The passage at the end of Hebrews chapter ten speaks of having a faith to a preservation of our *soul* (lit. *life*) in that kingdom. Since *soul* can be translated *life*, it might be helpful to read it in that light. Reread 10:39 inserting the word *life* for the word *soul*, thinking in terms of *life in the coming age*. See if you understand better.

With this understanding, go back and read the passage at the beginning of today’s lesson. Hopefully this prepares you to see chapter eleven in its proper context.

Have a good day.

Day Two — Eyes of Faith

It is necessary to note once again that there is a flow of thought in the warnings of the Book of Hebrews. Let’s reduce each warning to its irreducible minimum. The flow is this — Don’t drift away from the words of the prophets and of the Lord (2:1-4 [reflecting back on ch. 1]); the things of prophecy have to do with the rest out ahead, so don’t miss out on *the rest*, in fact, strive toward it (chs. 3 and 4); we need also to strive to understand what is involved in this rest, and should the Lord so grant that you understand (come to maturity), don’t turn away (6:4-6), because if you heed the first three warnings, coming into a mature knowledge of these things, and then *sin against this knowledge*, there is a terrifying expectation of judgment (10:26-31). But don’t stop here! The author goes on to point out that there are (as of yet) unseen blessings in heeding these warnings — unseen through physical eyes, but seen through eyes of faith.

Yes, the flow of thought continues, and it is very important for us to see this. We need to understand *the other side* of the fourth warning. It is this — *if you heed this warning there is great expectation of reward*, but you, reader, only need endurance (10:35ff)! Then the author follows this encouragement with some examples of Old Testament saints who have endured conflict, looking ahead to that coming Day, living today *by faith*. They will *yet be rewarded* (ch. 11). They only await us.

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And that's it in a nutshell! (How'd ya like that?)

If you feel you have a grasp of the intent of the first two paragraphs in today's homework, then you are ready to pursue chapter eleven. If you don't yet see the flow, study the last two paragraphs until you do. Once you see how the first four warnings relate to chapter eleven, then it should fall right into its proper place.

I have the last few verses of chapter ten and the first few verses of chapter eleven printed below without the chapter break. Following the text are questions to draw out careful observation. There is no commentary here...just questions to draw out facts from the text.

Hebrews 10:37-11:2

37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. 38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. 1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

What kind of person is v. 38 dealing with, saved or unsaved? How do you know?

What are the two possibilities given for His righteous one?

And if His righteous one shrinks back, what does he shrink back to?

But what encouragement does the author give to his readers? He believes they will not be of those who shrink back but rather of those who do what?

Then comes Hebrews 11:1. What kind of faith is explicit in the text? (This type of faith is assumed in v. 1 based upon what is precisely mentioned in v. 39 from the previous chapter.) In v. 39, what phrase describes the faith referred to in Hebrews 11: 1? (Remember there were not chapter or verse divisions in the original.)

And what does that faith offer believers?

By *this kind of faith* (faith to the preserving [saving] of the soul [life]) what happened to men of old?

Now we come to a verse which, at first, may seem difficult to grasp. It's Hebrews 11:3. (Oh my! How I have struggled to understand!) But the surrounding context is what proves the verse — both the context which

precedes the verse and that which succeeds it. Having studied what precedes the verse, let's study what follows it, then we'll deal with v. 3 a little later in this week's study.

Hebrews 11

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds [lit., *ages*] were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Verse one is not so much a *definition of faith*, as much as it describes what faith actually does for us. The most simple *definition of faith* is *believing what God says about a matter*. And while that definition defines the word faith in this verse, the verse goes on to say exactly what this faith does for us. This “believing what God has said about these future things” preserves (or obtains, or saves) our soul (life) in the coming age. This faith (to the saving of the soul) is the very foundation upon which rests *all that we hope for* — all that *we look forward to* — but cannot yet see with our eyes. In fact, it takes *eyes of faith to see the very things upon which God desires us to focus*, things which cannot be seen by the natural eye.

Reread verse one. Doesn't it say just that?

Now connect that thought with the fact that *men of old* (OT saints) *gained approval* for having this kind of foundation in place in their lives. In fact, *because they looked forward to these things*, through eyes of faith, they performed certain works — works which emanated out of this faith. That is what most of Hebrews chapter eleven has to do with. Showing what these Old Testament saints did, because they saw things, which their natural eyes could not see...they saw these things through eyes of faith, they saw the future, and because of what they saw, they did certain things. Now reread Hebrews 11:1-3 and rewrite the passage in your own words. (Prayerfully, spend a little time in thought on verse three, I think you'll get it.)

For the remainder of today, I would like you simply to reread Heb. 10:26-11:40 with these thoughts in mind. Read slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully. Ask the Lord to open your eyes of faith just a little wider! Then a little wider. Then a little more. Ask Him to fill you with comprehension, for apart from Him, we would not be able to fathom it. So your assignment is this — As you read through the chapter this time, make notes in the margins of your observation sheets the words or phrases which describe something the men/women of old *saw*, something they *looked for*, etc. Things which are future, and can only be seen through spiritual eyes, not physical eyes.

Have a good day of study. Then be ready to share these insights with you class.

Day Three — Looking Ahead through Faith

You may or may not have noticed a truth running throughout the entire chapter in Hebrews eleven, which really begins in chapter ten. I hope you noticed it. It took me a long time to see it, but now it is glaring to me.

Did you notice how each of the individuals who are identified in this “Faith Chapter” looked ahead and *saw* something, through faith, which is invisible to physical eyes? They saw something future. Something glorious. Something worth obedience, or suffering for here and now, because, through faith, they knew it would be better then and there. Their gaze was forward! And so ours should be also.

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Today I would like you to read through the chapter again, this time through, answer the questions written below, which will reveal that flow of thought. (Don't worry if you don't see something right away. We'll cover this again in the lecture.)

Let's take a moment to look at each individual and see what they did and why, and perhaps, the outcome for them. With your chapter sheets in hand —

What did Abel do through faith?

What did Abel obtain?

What did Enoch do through faith? (This one is a little tricky. Think through it carefully. The passage dealing with Enoch runs through v. 6.)

What did Enoch obtain?

How would verse six reflect Enoch's life?

Because of the context of v. 6, what might we understand about Enoch?

What did Noah do through faith?

What was Noah warned about?

What did he become, as a result?

What did Abraham do through faith?

What was Abraham looking for? Could he see it with physical eyes?

Why was Sarah able to conceive, even when she knew she was too old? Why was she able to do this?

Then we have a pause. A recap. Verse 13 recaps what happened to these who died. How did they die?

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Write vv. 13-16 in your own words.

In vv. 17-19, how was Abraham further tested?

Spend a moment thinking about this test for Abraham. Don't just answer these questions in a rote sort of way. Having received promises concerning this son, write down what this test would have meant to Abraham.

We'll pick it up here tomorrow.

Day Four — Looking Ahead through Faith, con't.

We'll pick up where we left off yesterday in Hebrews chapter eleven. Begin your study time in prayer. Then get back into Hebrews chapter eleven.

In v. 20, what did Isaac do through faith?

What, of Isaac's faith, would this imply?

What would this imply about Jacob and Esau?

(Make a note of Esau here, for we will see him again in the next chapter.)

What did Jacob do through faith? (If you are interested, you could read the blessings he spoke over his sons concerning the future in Genesis 49.)

What did Joseph do through faith?

What does this imply of Joseph's understanding and belief?

What did Moses's parents do through faith?

What was at risk here for his parents?

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What did Moses choose to do through faith?

Why did he do this? What did he “see?”

How did Moses leave Egypt? How could he endure?

What does it say about Moses keeping the Passover? How did he keep it?

(Go figure! The *act of Passover* made the way for redemption, but *their faith* is what led them out. Redemption is always through faith!)

What did the first generation of the Children of Israel do through faith?

What did the second generation of the Children of Israel do through faith?

What did Rahab do through faith?

(Joshua chapters two and six deal with the story concerning Rahab, the harlot. While nothing is said per se in the Book of Joshua about Rahab’s faith, we can know without doubt that she had faith, because the author of Hebrews records it.)

What did Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets do through faith (vv. 32-34)?

What did others do through faith (vv. 35-38)?

Then we have another recap. Rewrite vv. 39-40 in your own words. Then compare this recap to the one found earlier in the chapter, vv. 13-16.

I hope you get the picture. These people performed certain acts, which have age-lasting ramifications, *because* they looked forward to the very thing God desires us to look forward to. By looking ahead, these men of old believed that what will exist cannot be seen through what now exists (v.3), and this list is given to us as examples of the kind of faith which has this foundation. We are to reflect upon this as we live our lives here on earth, with the encouragement that these kind of blessings can be ours if we but heed the warnings given to us throughout the Book of Hebrews.

Think about it.

Day Five — Faith Connected to the Fourth Warning

Do you know how good repetition is for maintaining what you have learned? In fact, it is the only way to grasp and maintain the things learned. *It is so easy to drift away from this knowledge if it is not ever before you.* So please bear with the repetition today and tomorrow. Although you will see it is not simply repetition of what you learned yesterday, but repetition with more information added. So hang in there.

Today I would like for you to go back through the section of Hebrews which deals specifically with the fourth warning. Look for both sides of the warning — the negative and the positive side. As you go, make notes of the negative side of the warning (10:26-31, 38), and then note the positive side of the warning (Heb. 10:32-11ff). Strive to understand why it is better *to know*, than *not to know*, for the question is often asked, “If the knowledge of these things brings more accountability in my life, then isn’t it better not to know? Isn’t ignorance bliss?”

Do your reading now with this question in mind.

The negative side of the warning:

The positive side of the warning:

So what do you think? Is it better to know or not to know? “If the knowledge of these things brings more accountability in my life, isn’t it better not to know? Isn’t ignorance bliss?” Write out what you think.

I hope you see that ignorance is **not** bliss. The very first warning in the Book of Hebrews deals with simple ignorance of these things — ignoring this so great salvation! There will be a just recompense if you ignore these things (Heb. 2:1-3). And it seems that once an individual takes hold of this knowledge, he/she is in line for great reward! And that is the essence of what the author is dealing with in the last half of chapter ten and all of chapter eleven. Both sides of the picture — you can’t receive the fullness of the blessings apart from knowing, but — *in knowing*, you will be held more accountable.

I mentioned a few days ago that we would come back to Hebrews 11:3. So we’ll do that now. With the understanding of seeing things through eyes of faith, read the passage —

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Hebrews 11

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds <165> were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. 4 By faith Abel...

Write out the definition from the Appendix for the word *worlds* <165>:

How are we to understand v. 3? Notice that the Greek word *aion* has been translated *worlds*. I am afraid that this gives a connotation that the verse is dealing with the physical universe and leads to improper interpretation. The context comes to our aid in interpretation. Go to Heb. 10:36, 37, and write out what the author is talking about.

Hebrews chapter eleven picks up right here. The “*things hoped for*” are things which will come to pass in the coming age. They are the “*things not seen*” (not yet anyway, and not with physical eyes!). Which brings us to v. 3. The author has used the word *aion*. The question is, in the context, is the author dealing with the physical universe, or is he dealing with ages? Let’s insert the word “ages” for the Greek word *aion* and see if it makes sense.

Now faith (believing what God has said about these future things) **is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen** (through physical eyes)...**By** (this) **faith we understand that the ages were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen** (through faith) **was not made out of things which are visible** (seen by physical eyes).

Perhaps it would help to read it like this —

Believing what God has said about these future things is the very foundation of the things you hope for, the very conviction of these things not yet being seen (through physical eyes)... It is by (this) faith that we can understand that the ages past and future were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen only through the eyes of faith, for it is yet future. These things were not (and will not be) made out of things which are visible (seen by physical eyes) in this present age. They relate to everything yet future.

All of this propels our gaze forward. But doesn’t the entire Book of Hebrews do that?

Be sure to write out the essence of the fourth warning on your sheet in the Appendix entitled THE FIVE WARNINGS OF HEBREWS.

See you in class.

The only commentary work to do this week is in Philip Mauro’s book:

Philip Mauro’s book God’s Pilgrim, read chapters eleven and twelve.