

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
The Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 11, Verses 20-29
Notes From Class on March 30, 2010
Last Revised on (April 12, 2010)

Songs

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father

We thank you for this day, and for this opportunity to study your word together.

Please open our ears, and our minds, and our hearts to what we read.

Please guide our understanding and give us more faith.

Please give us opportunities to express our faith, in action.

By ministering to one another and proclaiming your glory to the world.

In Jesus Name we pray.

Amen

Introduction

Welcome and thanks for coming to our weekly Bible study.

Presently, as you know, we are studying the New Testament Book of **Hebrews**.

Last time our discussion took us to Verse **19** of Chapter **11**

Tonight we will continue our reading from Verse **20**.

But first let's begin, as usual, with a quick review of what we have studied so far.

And before we begin our review, let me give you a chance to get whatever you might need.

If you do not already have one, please pick up a copy of the handout containing the ESV text for Hebrews.

There is coffee and tea at the back.

Please get what you need and let's get started.

Review

As we have continually noted,

 Hebrews appears to be the text of a **sermon**,

 written around the end of the **First Century**, A.D,

 to be delivered to a group of **Christians**

 at least some of whom were in danger of "**falling away**"

 and needed to be encouraged to "**hold fast**" to their faith in Jesus Christ.

 The preacher reminds them of the **unqualified** supremacy of Christ **(1:1 - 3:6)**.

 and urges them not to repeat the mistakes of the Children of **Israel**,

 who had so often fallen away from **God**. **(3:7 - 4:13)**.

 He portrays Jesus as a great **high priest** **(4:14 - 5:10)**

 and tries to help them understand that to reject **Jesus**, would be to reject **all** hope of salvation. **(5:11 - 6:20)**

 The old **priesthood** and **law** have been superseded and replaced by something better **(7:1 - 8:7)**.

 The Old **Covenant** has been replaced by a **New** Covenant **(8:8-8:13)**.

 The **ceremonies** and rituals of the Old Covenant are **obsolete**. **(Chapter 9)**

 The death of **Christ** has atoned for sin --- once and for all **(Chapter 10:1-18)**.

 Now **all** may draw near to God with confidence **(Chapter 10:19-22)**.

 and if we have **faith** and **persevere** until the end, our souls shall be **preserved**. **(Chapter 10:23-39)**

 That is a very quick review of the first **ten** chapters of Hebrews.

 The preacher clearly intends to encourage his **listeners** to have faith and to persevere until the end.

 Chapter 11 (which we are still reading) supports this by looking backwards in time, at Biblical **examples "saving faith."**

 With minor exceptions, these examples are arranged **chronologically**.

Please follow along in the text as I very quickly review what we have covered so far in Chapter 11

It is by faith that Adam knows that the universe is created by a transcendent God. (Chapter 11:1-3)

It is by faith that Abel knew what pleases the Creator and was able to worship Him (Chapter 11:4)

It was by faith that Enoch maintained his special relationship with God (Chapter 11:5-6)

By faith Noah was able to obey and trust God through great tribulation (Chapter 11: 7)

By faith Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob continued to obey God and trust in his promises despite the fact that only a small part of what they were promised would be fulfilled in their lifetime (Chapter 11:8-10)

By faith Sarah finally looked beyond the utter impossibility of what she had been promised and received her son Isaac, and she rejoiced, although she was very old and would not live to see the fulfillment of most of the things promised to her offspring. (Chapter 11:11-12)

Indeed all of these great heroes of faith died before having received most of what God promised.

Their hope looked beyond their death and above this earth toward a time and a place God had prepared for them, and so God was not ashamed to be called their God. (Chapter 11:13-16)

The last time we met, we read and spent the whole time discussing the story of how God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac! (Chapter 11:17-19)

Can someone please tell us that story.

God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Abraham obeys God.

God stops Abraham before he is able to sacrifice Isaac.

But because Abraham was ready to sacrifice Isaac, God promises to bless Abraham, and Abraham's descendants and, through them, all nations of the earth.

Which we understand to contemplate the coming of Christ and his kingdom.

And so the coming of Christ, by which we are saved, is in fulfillment of promises made to Abraham because of his faith, which faith was demonstrated by his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, and in other ways.

As we discussed last time, God **put** Abraham into such an impossible situation to **test** his faith.

This was not because **God** needed to test Abraham to discover whether Abraham was faithful.

Rather this was to **demonstrate** Abraham's faithfulness to everyone else, for all time!

According to the inspired author of Hebrews, Abraham reasoned that **because** all of God's promises depended on Isaac, it would be **impossible** for Abraham to kill Isaac and for Isaac to remain dead.

Abraham therefore continued believing in the **promises of God and** obeying the **word** of God even though these two things appeared contradictory in the present circumstances.

It was by **faith** that Abraham knew that, somehow, Isaac would be coming down the mountain alive and God's promises fulfilled. (Even though Abraham had **never** before seen anyone or anything die and then come back to life!)

It was **because** of this faith that God was not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, and He resolved to come down in Christ and save the whole world through the faithful Abraham and his descendants.

Q. Once again, how do we **know** that Abraham had faith?

A. By what Abraham **did**!

His faith and his works were **connected**.

This is the point that is made in James, Chapter 2, and elsewhere, as we discussed last time: faith is **completed** in works and, conversely faith **without** works is dead. You can't have one without the other.

Jesus himself models this. He went to the **cross** at the cost of absolutely everything he had to give, trusting that God would somehow remain worthy of his trust.

God's friends are observed to **forsake** the world, as the **cost** of that friendship.

God's **enemies** (on the other hand) seek to make themselves at **home** here.

This was the thought with which we concluded our previous lesson.

Before we read on are there any questions or comments?

Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 20-22

Now, would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 11, Verses **20-22**, in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read that same verse in English (ESV).

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.

Thank you.

As we read in the previous verses, the promises made to Abraham, were to come **through** Isaac.

Likewise **Isaac** was told that these promises would proceed **through** Jacob, although certain blessings were also reserved for Esau.

Isaac **pronounced** these blessings accordingly.

In verse 20 we read:

(Verse 20)

By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

Here the invocation of future blessing is described as an act of **faith**

The blessing is **not** an "incantation" but rather an expression of trust, that God will keep his promise

We see something similar when **Jacob**, from his deathbed, pronounced blessings on the next generation.

Here (in Hebrews) mention is made only of the blessing of Joseph's sons, that is Jacob's **grandsons** through Joseph.

In Verse 21 we read

(Verse 21)

By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

As you may recall Jacob went out of his way to pronounce a special blessing on Joseph's

younger son, Ephriam, even though it was customary to confer the greater blessing on the older son.

And history recounts that Ephriam was, **indeed**, especially prosperous.

Likewise other blessings conferred by Jacob on his other sons (not mentioned here) proved **prophetic**,

from which we can only conclude that Jacob, like Isaac and Abraham before him, had certain special things **revealed** to him by God about the future.

We never understand these blessings as magic but, rather, as **proclamations** of God's faithfulness by those who have faith in God and believe his **promises**.

The future belongs to God no less than the present or the past. Therefore what **God** promises about the future must surely come to pass and, indeed, is **already** part of God's reality. He cannot not lie or change his mind.

Thus may we **pronounce** blessings in accordance with the express will of God.

Finally, Verse 22 reads:

(Verse 22)

By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

I think you all know of **Joseph**, the youngest and most famous son of Jacob.

His **brothers** were jealous of him and sold him into slavery.

Later Joseph rose to be the second most powerful man in Egypt and **saved** his brothers **and** his father and, indeed Egypt and neighboring countries from starvation, through his prophetic and administrative gifts.

His whole family finally came down to be **with** him in Egypt, and they settled there.

Before he died, he **reminded** his family that eventually they would leave Egypt.

This was **not** prophesy, I think, but **memory** of the promise which God had made first to Abraham many years before and subsequently repeated to Isaac and Jacob.

Joseph **reminds** them of **that** promise and, then, makes them promise **him** something: that they will take his bones with them when they leave Egypt and proceed to the land which God had promised them.

Q. Joseph was a very wise and faithful and Godly man --- among the most Godly in the Bible. Why would he **care** where his bones would be kept, after his death?!

Q. Did he think God **needed** those bones for something? Or that their **location** would matter somehow?

A. No. Joseph surely know that his salvation did **not** depend on the location of his bones.

A. But he knew that God would **keep** his promise and he also knew that **most** of his people would find it difficult to trust and obey God as they should do (perhaps he was afraid that because he himself had brought them down to Egypt and made them prosperous there, some of them would be inclined to stay) so he let his bones become a **symbol** of his solidarity with them and with YHVH and with the promised exodus!

That is, he was **reminding** them of the importance of not falling away from God,

of the importance of **not** making themselves at **home** in Egypt and in the world!

I think that is the most likely answer. This may also explain why Abraham and Isaac and Jacob before him were fussy about where there bones were laid --- always having them carried back to Canaan and buried there.

Perhaps they just wanted the next generation to have one more reason to remember God's promises.

At the very least, all of this concern with earthly remains proves beyond any reasonable doubt that the patriarchs were looking **forward** beyond death to the **resurrection** and **eternal life**.

If they thought that death of their **body** was the end of the life of their **soul**, then they would not have cared **what** happened after their death.

Which is one of the **key** points the author of Hebrews is making.

The heroes of faith of whom we read in the Old Testament were looking **up** and **forward** to heaven and the new creation, and not to some earthly kingdom and reward.

Similarly **most** people in **most** cultures take care of the worldly remains of the dead because (I think) all men and women are made in the image of God and somehow know something of their own immortality.

By faith we know that every man and woman in this room is **immortal**.

Just as all men and women should be able to look at the universe and recognize that everything has been made by God and, even, to guess something of God's character from his creation, we should also be able to look at men and women, who are created in God's image and recognize that they are **immortal!**

The resurrection of **Christ**, therefore, speaks powerfully to all men and women, that which they already know in their hearts....that life **cannot** simply end in the grave; man has an immortal **soul** and therefore there is a possibility of resurrection and life eternal and that all of this is in the hands of an almighty God.

Men and women of faith **look** there --- to life eternal beyond the grave --- and to God --- and are not overly concerned with the things of this world, which is **already** passing away.

And they must ultimately look to Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who is the forerunner and the firstborn of **all** who inherit eternal life.

This is the good news that Christ brings.

That is the Easter message.

That there is life beyond death

Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 23-29

Now, would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 11, Verses **23-29**, in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read that same verse in English (ESV).

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.

Thank you.

(Verse 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.

We come now to Moses, the next hero of faith that the author of Hebrews wishes to stop and examine.

But you will notice that, in the early part of this history, Moses was a newborn baby, and whatever faith was in evidence was not his faith, but that of his parents.

And we have no reason to believe that Moses' parents were absolutely unique in all of Israel at that time, so their faith is evidence of the faith that remained in the nation as a whole at that time.

God and the promises he had made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephriam, and the rest had not been completely forgotten in Israel.

OK, then, back to the story.

You will remember that the whole nation of Israel, that is Jacob and all of his descendants, had moved down into Egypt and settled there at the time of the great famine, when Joseph ruled the nation under the King.

But time went by, Joseph died, his memory faded, and the people of Israel became so prosperous and so numerous that they began to frighten the rulers of Egypt.

So Israel was oppressed and descended into slavery.

Still the people prospered and multiplied, so the King of Egypt ordered that all of the male babies born in Israel should be killed.

It was at this time that Moses was born.

But his parents defied the order of the king, and hid Moses, so that he would not be killed.

Then after three months, they put him in a little basket and floated it out on the river, where he was found by the daughter of the king of Egypt and raised in the king's household.

The author of Hebrews finds in this part of the story, evidence of the faith of Moses' parents and, also I think, evidence that faith of some sort still existed among the children of Israel in that day.

They could look at an infant like Moses, and see in him something of value and even of hope for the future, such that it was worth risking their own lives to defy the edict of the King, in an attempt to preserve the baby's life.

They would **not** have done this, I think, if they believed that they would all remain slaves forever in Egypt, the objects of this genocidal program to kill all male babies.

And some read the reference to Moses "beauty" to mean that they could somehow tell that he was destined to be their savior.

Be that as it may, their actions demonstrated some willingness to put themselves at risk in the **present** and, therefore, some faith in the **future** which God had promised.

(Verse 24)

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

Moses was raised in the house of the **king** of Egypt, and not for a short time.

He did not make his break with that household until he was "**grown up**"

According to Stephen, Moses was "**about 40**" when this happened.

So we can be sure it was a well considered **decision** of a mature man, not the emotional impulse of a child.

And his decision must also have been well **informed**. As a member of the king's household, he would have had at his disposal many living Hebrews with whom to converse and all of the records of the the Egyptian empire going back to the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the rest.

So when he **refused** to accept his position in the household of the King, and all of the worldly advantages this position gave him, he was making a **costly** personal decision in favor of solidarity God's people and, therefore, with God.

(Verse 25)

choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

To chose to be an Israelite at that point, was to chose to be mistreated, and to chose to turn away from all of the pleasures that money and power and the Egyptian court had to offer.

In this way Moses was very like his ancestor **Joseph**.

Q. Why would anyone do this?

Q. i.e. Why would anyone turn **away** from food and drink and shelter and safety and sensual pleasures of every kind and **toward** a life of cruel slavery?

A. The answer can only be "faith" Moses believed in the existence of God, and he believed that the eternal reward of following God was of more worth than everything that Egypt could offer in one lifetime.

Or the following verse, 26, says it a little differently

(Verse 26)

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Because Moses was looking forward and upward to the eternal reward which belongs to God's people, in this life he counted the troubles which belong to God's people as being more valuable than any treasures the world can offer.

The troubles are called the "reproach of Christ"

Remember that the word "Christ" is equivalent to the Hebrew "Messiah" meaning "God's anointed."

Moses was aligning himself with Israel, Gods' anointed people, and exposing himself to the same reproach which they suffered.

In the same way, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, would endure reproach.

So, too, must all of us who choose to follow Jesus be ready to endure reproach.

We should be glad when we suffer for Jesus name sake, because great is our reward in heaven.

We touch on a point here that is worth clarifying.

We all know that eternal life is a free gift of God, as is the faith through which we receive it.

Thus we understand that none of us can boast or imagine that we deserve or might possibly earn our salvation.

However for those who (by the grace of God through faith) have been redeemed, there will be rewards.

This is like grace added onto grace --- superabundant grace!

So let us not become weary of doing good or regret that we may suffer the reproach of Christ.

Rather let us rejoice that we are allowed the privilege of sharing in his suffering.

Such **suffering** is more valuable than the **pleasure** of this world.

Thus can we understand the actions of Moses and other men and women of faith.

(Verse 27)

By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

You will remember that Moses left Egypt **twice**: once after he killed the Egyptian who had been mistreating an Israelite and, finding himself despised by both Egypt and Israel, went into exile in Midian.

The second time he left Egypt, he was leading the whole nation of Israel out of slavery, with the whole army of Egypt in hot pursuit.

The statement in verse 27 fits the **second** exodus perfectly.

But we could **also** understand it to fit his first departure.

In either case the point is the same, and fits the overall pattern of Moses dealings with God and Egypt from the time he was about 40 years old,

He **listened** to God and obeyed him and he **defied** the king of Egypt --- not perfectly, but admirably, and as only a man could do who had true faith in the living God.

(Verse 28)

By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

Here the author of Hebrews remembers the final plague which came against Egypt, to convince the king of Egypt to let God's people go.

This was when an angel of the Lord came to kill all of the firstborn in Egypt.

But the firstborn among **Israel** were spared because they had sprinkled blood on their door posts, just as the Lord had instructed them to do.

So when the Destroyer came, he "**passed over**" the houses of Israel, because of the blood.

Q. Why, I ask you, would people kill animals and sprinkle animal blood on their door posts?

Q. Why would that, animal blood, be effective in turning aside the wrath of an angelic destroyer?

A. Simple. He who pronounced the curse was He who pronounced the cure, even God!

A. Israel under Moses had enough faith to believe in both things, the curse and the cure.

The blood had no **magical** properties, to summon or to repel angelic curses.

But **God** has all such power, and the sprinkling of the blood, as **ordained** by God, was a symbol of their **faith**....a symbol of their obedience and trust in God.

We see something similar in the ordinances of the **Lords Supper** and **Baptism**.

These are **not** magical ceremonies, but important **symbols** of spiritual truths, ordained by God, in which we believe.

When we perform these ordinances, they are symbols of our **faith**.

And the faith which they symbolize has **real** consequences, as we have been discussing.

i.e. real faith manifests itself as **action**.

(Verse 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.

God parted the sea for his **people** to escape from Egypt and commanded Moses to lead them across.

On this occasion, they **trusted** God and **obeyed** him, and they crossed to safety.

Without such faith, they might have remained slaves in Egypt or they might even have been slaughtered by the pursuing Egyptian army.

At a later time, when their faith faltered, they would even discuss turning **back** to Egypt and slavery.

Those were the wilderness wandering years, which the author of Hebrews has treated as a purely **negative** example.

But on this day, God **gave** them the faith that they needed to do this thing.

The Egyptians, for their part, foolishly tried to pursue God's people through the sea and, realizing their mistake too late, they were covered with water and drowned.

Such will **always** and ultimately be the fate of those who oppose God and his people.

However, we observe, and the Bible teaches, that the ungodly often go unpunished in *this* life, and the godly often suffer reproach

It is not until the end of this age and the coming of Christ's kingdom, when justice be fully satisfied.

We who belong to Christ, do not fear the coming of his kingdom, **not** because we are without sin,

But because He Himself had already borne our sin, and now bids us come, clothed in **his** righteousness.

Not only may we approach him safely when he returns, but it is said that he will even **reward** us for what we have suffered in his name.'

But woe to those without Christ when his kingdom comes. Their fate is frightening to contemplate.

Thus should we value the **reproach** of Christ now more than all of the **pleasures** the world can offer.

Let us pray.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

In Jesus Name we pray,

Please forgive us our sins and help us to forgive one another.

Please fill us with your Spirit and give us very great faith.

Please help us to bear the reproach of Christ in this life.

Please help us to hear and obey all of Christ's teachings.

And please help us to endure in faith until the end.

May your kingdom come and your will be done.

On earth, and in us, as it is in heaven.

Come Lord Jesus.

Come quickly.

Amen