

Previously we noted the Hebrews writer used the familiarity of the temple and its body politic to introduce some new understandings and further reinforce previous teaching about the role of the *new* High Priest, the *new* Covenant, and how the Christ makes manifest all of what was foretold to our forebears in the lives we now live in a special *new* temple, a dwelling place pitched by the Lord God Himself.

Last week, we hopefully took the rich nuanced writing of Holy Spirit very seriously. He reminds us to jab each other to love others and to good deeds. He calls on us to deal with each other up close and personal—we cannot afford to miss opportunities to do so when we meet. Finally, He inspired the Hebrews writer to remind us of all we would give up if we “shrink back” on the Lord God. And, He reminds us of the nature of Who does the judging, and with what criteria. We do not want to be in the hands of the angry living God (note Edwards’ take on the issue, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*.<sup>41</sup>)



So, now we are confronting the application of the most powerful theological doctrine of all time—what gift from God makes the blood of Christ effectual? In other words, what makes Father God’s anger melt, Holy Spirit’s grief thaw, and Christ’s heart soften. It is indeed the life of the righteous. But how do we live a *righteous* life? That’s the emphasis on our next Lord’s Day together, a life of faith.

I cannot emphasize sufficiently the theological import of faith. It is the *χαρις* (kah-ris, Greek for “gift”) faith in the Lord God which demonstrates His character—**He** is faithful. Nor, can I over-emphasize the doctrinal import of faith—without the gift of faith from the Lord God, it is impossible to please Him. And, finally, I am overwhelmed by the applicatory value of faith—without the gift of faith,<sup>42</sup> neither do we understand the Lord God nor His presence within our lives.

#### REMEMBER...

1. *The God we serve is just—He keeps His promises.* Hebrews 6:9-20.
2. *The superiority of Melchizedek—even Abraham showed him fealty.* Hebrews 7:1-10.
3. *The Levitical priesthood had serious limitations, but not the Christ.* Hebrews 7:11-19.
4. *The change was warranted by oath from Father God Himself.* Hebrews 7:20-22.

“BECAUSE OF THIS OATH, JESUS THE CHRIST HAS  
BECOME THE GUARANTEE OF A BETTER COVENANT.”

5. *The permanent priesthood of Christ assures our sins are forgiven.* Hebrews 7:23-28.

<sup>41</sup><http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/sermons.sinners.html>

<sup>42</sup>Remember, it is **not** our faith which saves us for all have faith in something—otherwise we lose our humanity and our ability to act, to behave, to think rationally. Faith is a gift from the Lord God; it is not of our own making (1 Corinthians 12:9). As such, we can only say, and live “thanks” for this gift of trust, recognize that if our faithfulness were the criterion for righteousness, we would **always fail**, miserably. It is **God’s** faithfulness to His nature which makes our gift from Him powerful. Our trust, our faith, must be in **His** faithfulness, not our own. Ours will fail; His will not.

6. *Our High Priest oversees a superior relationship with Father God.* Hebrews 8:1-6.

Here's the bottom-line... We do have such a High Priest; i.e., One who is holy, blameless, pure, and exalted in heaven! Our High Priest has sat down, and done so and on the right hand of Majesty Himself. He serves in a sanctuary (σκηνης, skay-nays, a tent, tabernacle, dwelling place, mansion), a true tabernacle, made/pitched not by men,<sup>43</sup> but by the Lord God Himself.

BUT... the ministry to which Jesus the Christ has been called is *superior*. He is a mediator to a new and superior covenant. This covenant is found on *better* promises.

7. *Our God saves by becoming part of us—He alone has the resources to ensure we can be sufficiently sinless to be a partner within His new temple.* Hebrews 8:7-13.

If the previous covenant was not problematic, there would have been no logical reason for another covenant. BUT... the Lord God found fault in us, the believers for whom He created the covenant. Here's how He told us a long time ago (Jeremiah 31:31-34), about what was to happen when **we** failed to faithful...

*Listen up! I will make a new covenant with all the children of Abraham<sup>44</sup>—including, Israel and Judah. This new covenant is different than the one which let believers out of Egypt yet did not stop us from becoming unfaithful. In that case, I turned away from them,<sup>45</sup> wanting to destroy them and start over (see Exodus 32:10).*

*This covenant? It is different for My character (as reflected in My laws) will become part of who they are—in their minds, and make My will part of their raison d'être.<sup>46</sup> I will be their God and they will be My people.*

*No longer will people be dependent upon others to teach them about Me, for I will be in them; all will know Me, from the least to the greatest. I do not abide within the wicked. So, most importantly, I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.*

So, when the Lord God called this covenant “new,” He made the old one obsolete and what is obsolete and aging? It will soon disappear.

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<sup>43</sup>It was this assertion by Stephen which got the Sanhedrin riled up, so much that they were able to kill him legally. Stephen had insulted the “temple” by saying it was not the Temple God had in mind. Only for temple desecration did Rome allow capital punishment. Here are the words which incensed his accusers and got him stoned—

“The Most High does not live in houses made by men... and you stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered Him—you who have received the Law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it.”

<sup>44</sup>Remember the “descendants of Abraham” are no longer those who can (Judah, Levi, Benjamin) or might be able to (diaspora) trace their ancestors to Abraham. Then, as today, “descendants of Abraham” are determined more accurately; to wit, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ**, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” –Galatians 3:28-29

<sup>45</sup>The Hebrews writer is using the LXX (Septuagint) version of Jeremiah 31.

<sup>46</sup>Sounds similar to a fulfillment of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4ff), does it not?

8. *While our orthopraxy was instructive, it had its limits.* Hebrews 9:1-10. We were given pedagogically valuable commandments by the Lord God for worship and the pattern for an earthly temple.
9. *The blood of Jesus the Christ justifies the new relationship between people and the Lord God.* Hebrews 9:11-14. As the High Priest, Christ went through the more perfect tabernacle, a *spiritual* tabernacle not part of the material world. He did not enter the temple by means of goat or calf blood, but He entered the Holy Place by means of His own blood. In doing so, He alone secured<sup>47</sup> (εὐραμενος) eternal redemption.
10. *The death of Jesus the Christ validates the new relationship between people and the Lord God.* Hebrews 9:15-28. In order for a will to be executed for any designated heirs, the death of the owner of the will must be established. A will has no legal standing unless death can be proven. Accordingly, the first covenant never took effect because the One who made it lives, then and now.
11. *Awake from death's imitation and see death's reality.* Hebrews 10:1-18. God's character as found in the Law was and is a mere shadow of He who is to come. Thus, the endless sacrifices, year after year, century after century, never made people sufficiently perfect to draw near to worship the Lord God. Believers were never cleansed, for it is theologically nuts to contend bull and goat blood could take away sin.

Sin has been forgiven—there is no longer need for any sacrifice for sin. I the Lord God have made all things whole. I make people holy, not sacrifices. Therefore...

12. *The Lord God has prepared a treasure for us—His presence.* Hebrews 10:19-25. Since we have a permanent, blameless High Priest who has sacrificed the perfect sacrifice, Himself, and shed blood to cleanse our sins (His blood) We ...
  - ✓ Have confidence to enter into God's Presence. Once we would have died from His glory (Exodus 33:18-23),<sup>48</sup> now we are protected by the blood of Father God's Son, Jesus the Christ.
  - ✓ Draw near with a sincere *raison d'être* fully assured by God's gift of faith for our hearts are sprinkled by God's cleansing power, pure and washed.
  - ✓ So, let us *katanomen* [κατανομεν to think fully, literally up and down to a precise conclusion, [2657](#)] how we can *paramoxamos* others [παραμοξυσμος; a provocation which literally jabs/cuts someone so they "must" respond, [3948](#)] to love one another and do good deeds. Furthermore, let us not give up on each other missing our meetings with each

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<sup>47</sup>εὐραμενος, heur-mea-nos, middle voice aorist, as in "he alone secured" or "he and no other secured," [2147](#).

<sup>48</sup>Then Moses said,

"Now show me your glory."<sup>19</sup> And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim My name, YAHWEH, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."<sup>20</sup> "But," He said, "you cannot see My face, for no one may see Me and live."<sup>21</sup> Then the LORD said, "There is a place near Me where you may stand on a rock."<sup>22</sup> When My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.<sup>23</sup> Then I will remove My hand and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen."

other, as some are habituated to do. Instead, let us *encourage*<sup>49</sup> each other, especially as we see our Day with the Lord God coming.

13. *Seriously? Severely? Sovereignty.* Hebrews 10:26-31. When we keep separating ourselves (sinning) after receiving the Truth—no sacrifice to cover our sins is left. We can only expect judgment—raging fire which will consume God’s enemies. We are God’s enemies when we separate ourselves from Him.<sup>50</sup>

“IT IS A DREADFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD.”

14. *Remember what you’ve been through.* Hebrews 10:32-39. Remember. The earlier days when you first were enlightened by the Light. When you stood your ground, even though you faced suffering. The contest [αθλησιν, ath-lay-sens, conflicting sufferings, [119](#)] is just beginning!

- ✓ Remember. You were exposed publicly. You were insulted. Persecuted. Remember. You stood side by side with those who were being insulted, persecuted. Remember.
- ✓ Remember. You sympathized with those who were imprisoned. You accepted joyfully the confiscation of your property. Remember.
- ✓ Remember. You knew you had better possessions. You knew you had *lasting* possessions.
- ✓ So? Don’t throw away your confidence—it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere to preserve your commitment to the will of the Lord God. You will receive what He has promised. We serve a faithful God. Remember—the righteous live by faith.
- ✓ Remember. We are not those who shrink back and are destroyed. We are those who believe and are saved!

Q But, **how** are the righteous to live? What characterizes those who are *not* being saved? Those who *are* being saved?

[Hint: the word “believe”<sup>51</sup> in verse 10:39 is the same word used in verse 11:1. This verse is a preamble to what we call chapter 11 of Hebrews.]

<sup>49</sup>*parakalēō* (from [3844](#) /*pará*, “from close-beside” and [2564](#) /*kalēō*, “to call”) – properly, “make a call” from being “close-up and personal.” [3870](#) /*parakalēō* (“personally make a call”) refers to believers *offering up evidence that stands up in God’s court*.

<sup>50</sup><http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/sermons.sinners.html>

<sup>51</sup>πιστεο, pisteo, faithfulness, having faith, 4102. <http://biblehub.com/greek/4102.htm>

Hebrews 11:1-3. Faith is the evidence of expected certainty. Unfortunately, “faith: in our culture is too often a synonym for irrational belief. When examined more closely, however, we see faith is a synonym for trust in an assumed truth.

For example, in geometry we assume the reality of a “straight line,” even though by definition a *straight* line does not exist. It’s value, however, is that assuming (i.e., “having faith in”) a straight line exists allows us to make extraordinarily powerful statements about area and volume. Similarly, there is no perfect arc, yet the presumption of  $\pi r^2$  allows us to make extremely important conclusions about circles and spheres.

Similarly, we assume God is (i.e., we trust in the expected certainty He is). By assuming God is, we understand more. For example, we are able to explain the question of *primus movatur* (Who/what created the universe?). Otherwise, we are confronted with an existence that is self-existent, an hypothesis unacceptable to believer and unbeliever alike.<sup>52</sup>

So, the believer assumes God is, and by doing so, can become more sure about our reasonable expectations. Furthermore, we can see why our forbearers were God-commended. It is through this faith/assumption we understand the universe was formed by God’s command — what is seen is not made out of what was or is visible.

- Q What other fields of endeavor make assumptions (i.e., advocate faith positions) in order to function or understand their domain more clearly? [Hint: e.g., biology assumes the inner workings of what is “alive” is fundamentally different from what is not “alive.” Or, politics assumes all entities have self-interested agendas.]
- Q When does faith not meet its role in understanding the Lord God? Or, any phenomena for that matter? What evidence suggests God does not exist and thus makes the God-assumption problematic? [Hint: falsifiability.]
- Q How is faith the *substance* of things hoped for, and the *evidence* of things not seen? When is trust no longer substantiative and when is trust no longer proof of what we can not readily recognize?

**HEBREWS 11:1-3**

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.<sup>2</sup> This is what the ancients were commended for.

<sup>3</sup>By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

**A QUESTION TO KEEP YOU THINKING:**

**WHAT MAKES FAITH PART OF A WELL-ARMED EPISTEMOLOGY?**

<sup>52</sup>This untenable hypothesis accounts for the popularity and the reason behind Descartes’ conclusion, “I think, therefore I am” (intriguingly enough using the name of God to justify and evince existence; cf., Exodus 3:14, Matthew 16:15, and especially John 8:58). Porter extended Descartes’ idea by advancing the next proposition—“I communicate to prove I am” (D. Thomas Porter, *A Cauffective Model of Interpersonal Sequencing: An Ontologically Based Conception of Communication*, Interpersonal Communication Division, International Communication Association, Dublin, Ireland, 1990). Thus, Porter argues that human reality is proven by our use of symbolic and quasi-symbolic behavior. Especially when pressed, then, humanity will engage in “communicative” behavior to reify its existence, whether conceived corporately or individually.

Hebrews 11:4-12. *Proof of faith in action—Abel to Abraham.* Let us consider the reality in the lives of people who relied upon the Lord Gods' faithfulness.

- ⌘ Abel offered a better sacrifice; he was commended as righteous. God spoke well about his offerings.
- ⌘ Enoch did not even experience death—he was commended by God because of his faith.

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Remember—it is impossible to delight God without faith. In fact, anyone who comes to God must believe God exists, and believe God rewards those who sincerely seek Him.

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- ⌘ Noah, when warned about a flood never seen, built an ark out of holy reverence and fear of the Lord God. His faith not only saved his family, but condemned a faithless world and became an heir to the only righteousness that counts—that which comes by faith.
- ⌘ Abraham was called to leave home. He obeyed and went, even though he didn't know where he was going. By faith he traveled to become a foreigner in a foreign land. Living in tents as did his sons and grandsons, he and they became heir to an inheritance from God Himself.
- ⌘ Abraham, after stumbling around with his trust in the Lord God with Hagar, he and his wife Sarah trusted in the Lord God to give them an heir, even during their age-related infertility. He did.

From one man's faith, who initially had no hope of a legacy of descendants, became not only the father of innumerable people, but also the spiritual father of all who are *ev* Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-29).

### HEBREWS 11:4-12

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

<sup>5</sup>By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. <sup>6</sup>And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

<sup>7</sup>By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup>For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

<sup>11</sup>By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he and Sarah considered him faithful who had made the promise.

<sup>12</sup>And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Hebrews 11:13-22. *Faith is future focused*. Even though these examples were still living by faith when they died, all saw their reward in the future. They recognized they were sojourning aliens on earth—all were longing for a better country, a heavenly land in which to live.

Critics say they could have gone back to their old ways, but they continued to long for heavenly ways in a heavenly land. So, God was not ashamed to be our God—He has prepared a city, a place for us (John 14).

Consider Abraham in this case. When called upon to sacrifice Isaac, the son for his legacy, he reasoned that God could raise the dead. In a way, that's just what happened—God saved Isaac from death.

Or, consider Isaac and how he blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. Or Jacob when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worship as he leaned on his staff. It was by faith Joseph, when he was dying, spoke about believers leaving the slavery of Egypt and trusting that his bones would be brought home. They were.

Q Why is the *future* focus of faith so critical?

Q How is the Lord God able to tolerate believers with all our imperfections?

Q How do we overcome the propensity to be so *future* focused (heavenly focused) that we're no good in the present (earthly good)?

Q Which of these inspires your faith the most—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph? Why?

## HEBREWS 11:13-22

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.

<sup>14</sup> People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, <sup>18</sup> even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." [Genesis 21:12] <sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

<sup>20</sup> By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

<sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

<sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

Hebrews 11:23-31. *Faith distinguishes, whether holy man or whore*. Faith caused Moses' parents to hide him to protect him from pharaoh's edict of death. And when he grew up, it was faith which caused him to reject being called a son of Egypt. He chose to be mistreated, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin.

In fact, he regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as greater than all the treasure of Egypt—he was looking *ahead* to his reward.

By faith he left Egypt—he persevered because he saw Him who was invisible working within his life. By faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of the firstborn so that the Lord God would not hurt the firstborn of Israel.

It was by faith, believers passed through the Sea of Reeds on dry land, yet the Egyptians attempt drowned them all.

It was by faith Jericho's walls fell—seven days of marching, seven days of faith.

It was by faith Rahab the prostitute welcomed the spies of God; she was not killed with all those who were disobediently unbelieving.

- Q To what extent does the Hebrew writer present a glossy view of Moses? To what extent are you comfortable with this gloss?
- Q To what extent are you concerned about the writer's inference that "the destroyer" is not the Lord God Jehovah?
- Q What fueled the faith of Moses? In the wilderness before Egypt? In the rescue from Egypt? In the wilderness after Egypt?
- Q Would the walls of Jericho fallen if they did only six days? Why not? [Hint: the equation of obedience and faith.]
- Q Why do you suppose the writer mentioned Rahab amongst all these other great heroes of faith?

## HEBREWS 11:23-31

By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

<sup>24</sup>By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup>He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. <sup>26</sup>He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. <sup>27</sup>By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

<sup>28</sup>By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

<sup>29</sup>By faith the people passed through the Sea of Reeds as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

<sup>30</sup>By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

<sup>31</sup>By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobediently unbelieving.



Hebrews 11:32-40. *Faith does great things with ordinary people.* There's not enough time to detail all of the great things done by Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. It was through faith these ordinary people did extraordinary things and became more than ordinary people.

Mouths of lions were shut, kingdoms were conquered, flames were quenched, swords were dulled, weakness became strength, and God's enemies were thwarted.

Even now we see it still happening. Women receive the dead back to life. Others are tortured and refuse to be released. They were looking for a real resurrection!

Others face jeers and flogging, prison time, stoning, being sawed in two, and death by the sword. They were put to the test.

Their clothing was of the destitute; their homes were holes and caves in the ground. Yet, they were all commended for their faith—even though none of them received then what they eventually would receive. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Q How does faith invigorate the faith of people like Deborah (Barak), or Gideon, or Samson?

Q How are today's caves, sheepskins, and mistreatments manifested?

Q What is it that the Lord God has planned which is better for us so that together with us we can be completed?

Q Given God's presence within our lives as God-indwelled believers, is there any more need for faith?

## HEBREWS 11:32-40

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets,<sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions,<sup>34</sup> quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

<sup>35</sup>Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.<sup>36</sup> Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.<sup>37</sup> They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—<sup>38</sup>the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

<sup>39</sup>These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.<sup>40</sup> God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.