

Liberty Online Ministries



By Faith Hebrews 11



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“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
Hebrews 11:1

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
Romans 12:2

The Foundation of Faith

Introduction – By Faith Series – Hebrews 11

Which do you think comes first in our lives- faith or obedience?

When we begin to think about it, it becomes apparent that faith and obedience are very closely related. We often must have faith in order to be obedient, yet even the very act of having faith is an act of being obedient.

Hebrews 11 tells of many people who demonstrated faith and obedience, and one thing that does seem to come first in all of these people’s lives is a proper perspective and focus. All of them seem to have a right view of God, His nature, and His character, as well as a right view of themselves and right priorities.

This right perspective is a good starting place for us, as well, for **faith is founded on a right perspective of God.**

How do we get this right focus and perspective of God?

Personal study of the Bible, memorizing scripture, prayer, and exposing ourselves to biblical teaching, all of which work to renew our minds (Romans 12:2), are a few of the ways that we can work to develop and maintain this right perspective.

Our society today tends to be filled with skepticism. We have lost faith in others, often because they have not lived up to their word or our expectations. We guard ourselves from trusting because we are accustomed to being scammed. Telemarketers, spam e-mail, television commercials- we face a barrage of false input everyday and develop a cynical attitude toward everyone and everything, often with good reason.

What have you lost faith in?

The biggest problem comes when we have this same attitude of distrust towards God. Although it is wise to be cautious in deciding whom we will believe, we are foolish to hold back from trusting the one Person who is completely trustworthy. **Faith is founded on Who God is.**

When we really understand God’s character, we realize how foolish it would be to doubt Him. An examination of God’s character will reveal that He is ultimately wise, reliable, and loving. Our obedience is the only response to Him that makes sense.

We are told in this chapter that these Old Testament saints gained God’s approval (Hebrews 11:2). Was it actually their works that saved these

“What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ ”
Romans 7:7

“For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”
Hosea 6:6

“Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, by itself.”
James 2:17

“For by {faith} the men of old gained approval.”
Hebrews 11:2

people? No, because God's standard then was the same as it is now. Perfection. While God does not require the same animal sacrifices and such that He did during Old Testament times, His standards are no lower now than they were then. He actually requires a higher level of obedience, as now the inner thoughts and motivations are put on trial rather than the outward actions only. For example, the commandment against murdering (Deuteronomy 5:17) is replaced by Jesus' teaching that we will be held accountable for being angry with our brother or calling him an unkind name (Matthew 5:21-22), and adultery now includes lust (Matthew 5:27-28).

It's incredible how much we fail to measure up to God's standards, isn't it?

This was the point of the extensive laws of the Old Testament (Romans 7:7) they were intended to point out our sinfulness and inability to meet God's holiness. We all miss perfection, whether in our inability to follow every last detail of the law of the Old Testament or in our failure to live in complete purity and love. In fact, the words used in both the Old and New Testaments for sin come from root words defined as “missing the mark.” This is a much more strict definition than what we often think of as sin (doing evil), and makes it much more obvious that we are all sinful. Even if you struggle to think of yourself as a “bad person,” it is not nearly so hard to admit that you are not perfect, is it? Either way, we are infinitely far from God's holiness.

God's desire of loyalty rather than sacrifice, even in the Old Testament (Hosea 6:6), demonstrates the level of importance that He places on the heart condition and faith versus sacrifice and offerings.

Which do you find easier to align with God's standards- your outward actions or your inner heart condition?

The thing that qualified or disqualified the men and women listed in Hebrews 11 was not their good works or sins. You will see as you explore the stories of these individuals that all of these people sinned none of them were perfect. The thing that was accredited to them was not their actual good deeds. It was their faith (Hebrews 11:2). The obedience of these saints stemmed from their faith, and was not just an outward action, but was a demonstration of the kind of faith that they had, which was real, relevant, and active. This is the kind of faith spoken of in James chapter 2, and is an example to us as we seek to live lives that are pleasing God.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

Obedience in Obscurity

“By faith Enoch...” – Hebrews 11

What is your attitude when you do something good?

- I keep it to myself and ponder what a really great person I am.
- Tell someone else so that they can ponder that fact, as well.
- Quietly remind God of my acts so that He can reward me accordingly.
- Other _____

Enoch's story can hardly even be considered a story—he is only mentioned briefly in the Bible. Basically all we know about him is that he lived a life on earth that was pleasing to God, that ended by being taken up by God rather than dying. For such a remarkable event, we are really told very little about what preceded or triggered this unique occurrence. This man's story is so unique that it is remarkable that not more is said about it in Scripture.

The fact that Enoch's story is clouded by obscurity implies something about his heart motivation. Enoch's life can be seen as setting an example about living a life to please God rather than men. Our purpose in living is solely to please God and to be considered faithful in His sight. It seems that Enoch lived this kind of life. We are told nothing of his wealth, fame, accomplishments, or even good deeds. However, in Hebrews 11, we are told that Enoch “was pleasing to God.” What an incredible comment to have said about oneself!

Even if your only reward is God's pleasure with you, will you still be happy? Or do you insist on having your story told to other people? Are you motivated more by what God thinks or what the people around you think?

Is your primary motivation the opinion of:

- God
- Your spouse
- Your in-laws
- Your coworkers
- Your friends
- Members of your church
- Your pastor
- Your neighbors

The scripture reminds us in Matthew 6:1-2 that if we are seeking our reward here on earth, that that will be the only reward that we receive.

We don't really know why God chose to take him up his story is somewhat shrouded in mystery. This story also gives us an example of the truth that we find in Isaiah 55:9, where we learn that God's thoughts are higher than ours. Although His perspective may not always make

“By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.”
Hebrews 11:5

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”
Matthew 6:1-2

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:9

“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”
Hebrews 11:6

sense to us, or be what we would have decided ourselves, we can know that it is always trustworthy and right.

In what area do you need to trust God's perspective rather than your own?

In God's higher wisdom (and unique sense of humor), He seems to delight in using the unlikely. We see Him choosing to use the prostitute Rahab to protect the lives of not only her family, but the lives of God's own people and an old and barren woman, Sarah, to mother the lineage of Christ. He used the angry and stuttering Moses to lead the nation of Israel out of bondage, and the adulterous David to be called the man after God's own heart. Even looking at the stories of the disciples in the New Testament reveals a motley set of flawed men that Jesus chose to begin the spread of the all-important message of the Gospel. Perhaps Enoch's life was uneventful. Perhaps his was a quiet and seemingly ordinary existence, with nothing to make him stand out in the eyes of man. What we do know about him is that God was pleased with his life.

How does the knowledge that God delights to use the unlikely make you feel in light of your failures and weaknesses?

Contrary to what we may believe at times in our limited perspective, God does not ever overlook us. Maybe you are going through a time right now that you feel that you are invisible.

What is your reaction when you feel overlooked?

- Anger
- I find a way to put myself in the limelight
- I feel sorry for myself

Are you content to live in obedient and faithful obscurity if that is what God asks of you?

Hebrews 11:6 reminds us that we cannot please God if we do not have faith. What area do you need to quietly have faith in God's wisdom?

Be encouraged to live faithfully, even if it seems that no one is noticing, because God is the rewarder of those who seek Him.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

Awe-inspired Obedience

“By faith Noah...” - Hebrews 11

“By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”
Hebrews 11:7

What is your general perspective of authority?

- They're all just power hungry.
- They have no right to tell others what to do.
- They are necessary, but irritating.
- They always have our best in mind and can never do wrong.

It was Noah's faith in and attitude toward God's authority that qualified him for inclusion in the list of giants of faith in Hebrews 11 along with Abraham, Moses, and other well-known individuals from Scripture.

For many of us it is a familiar story, even one we have heard since we were children, but let's look at it again. God had warned Noah about the upcoming flood that He was going to send, even though, at that point in time, it had never rained. He told Noah that He would save Noah and his family, and gave him specific instructions about building an ark in preparation for the storm.

What would your response have been in this situation?

- “Yes, Lord. I will do whatever you command.”
- “This is crazy- I'm not building a gigantic boat in the belief that water is going to fall from the sky.”
- “But what will people think of me?”
- _____

Instead of dismissing God's warning as ridiculous, or slowly and begrudgingly beginning the project with a less-than-enthusiastic attitude, Noah exhibited an attitude toward God that prompted his complete and respectful obedience. He did exactly as God commanded him to do.

What do you think prompted Noah's actions of faith and respect for God?

The courage and perseverance that Noah exhibited stemmed from a deep sense of awe. He had confidence in God's ability to care for him and that what He said would happen. Noah knew Who God really is.

We use the word awesome so frequently in our culture, but do the things we say that about really inspire awe in us? And are we really in awe of God, the only One worthy of our awe?

For example, does your perspective of God allow for building a ridiculously large boat at His request? Hmm- mine probably doesn't. We say that we have faith and that we will be obedient if God gives us direction, but is that really true?

Think about the position that Noah was in. He had never even seen rain, yet he was obedient in building a giant boat in preparation for a flood-

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
Hebrews 11:1

“Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.”
Genesis 6:22

“Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him”
Genesis 7:5

causing rain storm. Surely this seemed ludicrous. But Noah’s mind was not set on his own (or anyone else’s) opinion of what made sense- he was concerned only with what he had been told by God.

The things that God asks of us are not required to be logical—that’s part of faith—if everything made complete sense to us, would it require us to have any faith? When God warned Noah, He warned him about “things not yet seen.” “Things not seen”- this is part of the very definition of faith given in Hebrews 11:1. Yet how often do we fight this? We only want to “have faith” in things that we can see or that make sense to us at the time. We do not want to have faith in the things that seem uncertain or illogical. But that is not really faith.

Another thing that we can learn from Noah is about complete and precise obedience. Genesis chapters 6 and 7 tell us a little about how Noah obeyed. Genesis 6:22 and 7:5 say that he did *all* that God commanded him. Noah’s reverence for God compelled him to do everything that God said, right down to the smallest detail. I don’t know about you, but most of the time I demand an explanation for doing something that doesn’t make sense to me, or else I am pretty reluctant in my efforts.

While we may not be able to understand a given situation, God desires us to get to know Him and His trustworthiness. Noah wasn’t really stepping out blindly. He had a secure knowledge of God’s character. He had learned that God was faithful. That God was true. That God would be his provider. This is what enabled Noah to do what he did, and it is also what made his decision a wise one instead of a foolish one. He was not trusting a stranger. He was trusting the One who is ultimately trustworthy.

What is your reaction when someone asks you to do something?

- I’ll do it, but I will do it my own way.
- I will gladly do the task exactly as I have been told with a good attitude.
- I do what I am told, but while grumbling and rolling my eyes.
- I argue about how it should be done.

In a way, it can save us a lot of trouble to simply obey, without questioning and fighting. How much time and energy do we waste with our questions, our arguments, our worry?

That is the joy of submission. We give up our control of the situation, but we also give up the ultimate responsibility for how the situation turns out. Noah’s job was simple- not necessarily easy, but simple- to follow God’s directions. He was not responsible for the outcome of the situation, the rain, the safety of the animals or his family, the decision of who should be allowed to come on the ark, or even of how to get the door of the boat shut (Genesis 7:16). These were God’s responsibilities. Noah’s responsibility was to obey.

How often do you try to take on God’s responsibilities rather than focusing on your own?

“...and the LORD
closed it behind him.”
Genesis 7:16

Noah had an incredible amount of respect for God to do what he did. The thing is, God deserved every bit of that respect, and more!

How would our lives be different if we had the awe for God that He deserves? Radically different. How would your life be different if you lived with the awe for God that He deserves?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?



Following an Unseen Path

"By faith Abraham" – Hebrews 11

Check all that apply to you:

- I am the kind of person that falls apart if I don't have the next ten years of my life scheduled out.
- I don't know what I should be doing with my life right now.
- I believe that God is directing me to step out on faith, but I don't yet have all the details, and am feeling kind of nervous.

We actually read of Abraham facing this kind of situation in Hebrews 11:8-10.

The retelling of this story (originally found in Genesis) is set in the background of a list of heroes of the faith and their accomplishments. In contrast to the feats of others, such as Moses' parents defying the law of the land in order to save their son, Moses choosing to suffer for what he believed was right, the Israelites passing through the Red Sea on dry ground, the walls of Jericho being felled, Rahab harboring the Israelite spies at great risk to herself, or others who endured mocking and torture and imprisonment (Hebrews 11), Abraham's "accomplishment" of setting out without knowing where he was going seems a little foolish. Wouldn't it seem to us that the more impressive thing would have been if Abraham had known where he was going? Would it not have been better if he had come up with some great plan for his life and how he would serve God?

Not only does this seem to be what the rest of the world expects of us, but knowing what we are doing, where we are heading, and every detail of life along the way is desirable to us as well. Sometimes we want to come up with our own plans that seem more logical or safe than God's plans, rather than stepping out into the unknown.

What would have happened if Abraham had chosen another option? Write your thoughts below:

What might your reaction be in this situation?

- Demand to stay where you are, near the relative familiarity and safety of home.
- Decide that setting out without knowing where you are going is completely illogical, and stay put until God fills you in on all the details.
- Come up with your own location to move to.

Do we not do those very things, thinking that we have a better plan than what God has in store for us?

What do you need to trust God for today? What area of your life is He asking you to let Him direct rather than controlling it yourself?

"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. 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. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." Hebrews 11:8-10

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”
Proverbs 3:5-6

Obeying God

- Be in close fellowship
- Get rid of distractions
- Be unbound from the world

What enabled Abraham to take this step of faith? It was his focus. Verse 10 says that "he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." He knew Who God was, God's character. He knew that God's word could be trusted. Abraham did not step out on faith without a promise underneath it. If Abraham had decided himself that taking off in a random direction was a good idea, it simply would have been foolishness. Likewise, we are not demanded to set out on our own venture without direction from God. Sometimes we are to wait until He gives us direction. Of course, during these times of waiting we are not to be passive or lazy. We are always to be acting in obedience to the guidelines laid out in His Word. These things He has already told us to do.

What area do you need to be obedient in while you wait for further direction?

One way to prepare yourself to be in a position for obedience is to be walking in close fellowship with Him and learning to hear and recognize His voice so that you will be ready to set out when He directs you to.

Another way to prepare is to loosen your hold on comfort and avoid distractions.

What are some distractions that you have in your life?

Sometimes we may get so bound up in our lifestyles, possessions and routines that we are not able to quickly and easily let go when God does direct us to go. Verse 9 tells us of how when Abraham reached the Promised Land he lived in tents. This is evidence of the fact that he was willing to uproot again at any time that God told him to.

Also, keep in mind that obeying God in faith when we cannot see the outcome is not always comfortable, just as we see that Abraham did not immediately feel comfortable in his new location. Rather, he was like "a stranger in a foreign country."

Your form of going may be short or long term missions, a new job, a change of major, witnessing to that person you don't feel comfortable with, or sharing a kind word with a stranger. Whatever your unknown is, follow the model of Abraham, who set us an example of faith and obedience, and demonstrated the truths of Hebrews 11:1, which says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

Laughter and Faith

“By faith even Sarah...” – Hebrews 11

*“By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.”
Hebrews 11:11*

One of the two females mentioned in the chapter of Hebrews 11, Sarah demonstrated faith in God in a way that qualified her to be included among this list of the heroes of faith. Her story is probably most known for the time that she laughed when God told her that she would conceive and bear a son at the age of 90, but begins even earlier than that.

In Genesis 12 we learn of Sarah and Abraham facing a dangerous situation in which they are fearful for their lives in a foreign land. Abraham deals with the situation by lying about the fact that Sarah is his wife, which actually puts them both in harm's way. This same scenario actually happens again later, as well (Genesis 20). These situations may not have been dealt with correctly, but we do see Sarah making the right choice of trusting God to work the situations out, rather than taking them into her own control. She placed trust in God's sovereignty and ability to take care of her, even when the humans placed in her life to provide for and protect her failed at this task.

Think of a time in your life that it was difficult to trust God. It may even be right now.

Later the situation of Sarah having a child in her old age arises. God had already spoken to Abraham twice about the fact that He would legitimately make Abraham the father of many nations. However, Abraham and Sarah had come up with their own plan to work out this situation, and resultantly, an illegitimate child had been born to Sarah's maid, causing a great deal of conflict between Sarah and her maid.

Now God sends a messenger to speak to both Sarah and Abraham, and tells them once again that He will be giving them descendants more numerous than the stars. This time Sarah is around (hiding outside the tent eavesdropping) when God makes His pronouncement about what He is going to do through Abraham and Sarah.

Sarah's response of faith was not immediate. Just as we often do, she had a moment of incredulity when she heard of the plan that God had laid out for her, and she laughed at the promise that God made (Genesis 18). Sarah was not perfect. She made many mistakes, and went through times in which she did not have faith, yet we can learn from Sarah's example, both in her victories and failures.

How much easier would it have been had Sarah had a right attitude and trust toward God from the start? Isn't the same true with us? How much heartache could we save ourselves and others if we would be obedient and submissive to God from the beginning?

Describe a situation in your own life that you have seen first hand the consequences of doubting God.

“...and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.”
Romans 4:21

Eventually, Sarah chose to submit to God, and God proved Himself faithful when she did. It was when Sarah's view of God slipped that she fell into disobedience. When she maintained her right view of Him, God proved Himself more than capable of doing all that He had promised.

What promise of God's are you doubting?

From where did Sarah's ability to believe in God stem?

Verse 11 of Hebrews chapter 11 says that Sarah was able to conceive “since she considered Him faithful who had promised.” Instead of focusing on the weaknesses and failures of herself and the humans around her, Sarah recognized that One much more powerful and loving than any she had ever known was in control. In the end, Sarah came to have a right view of God, and Sarah's story teaches us much about the importance of having a correct view of God. When she did not maintain her focus on Him and His true nature, disaster ensued. When she did maintain that focus, God never let her down. Sarah's life was one that vacillated between trust and submission, doubt and resistance, and yet God's constant faithfulness and reliability remained stable throughout her life.

At times Sarah's focus slipped from God to those around her. She disregarded her task of obedience and instead took on the responsibility of working the situation out herself, or she put that responsibility on her husband, her maidservant, everywhere but where it needed to be. That is when things went wrong.

What or whom do you trust to work out difficult situations in your life?

- Money
- Myself
- Other people
- God

Sarah made mistakes, and when life seemed to be spinning out of control she sometimes faltered, but ultimately her trust was in God and His trustworthiness, faithfulness, goodness, wisdom, and power. Sarah could not see how some things could be done, and was wrong in rushing ahead and trying to help God along, but she believed God when He had said that He would make Abraham a father of many nations. Because of Sarah's obedience, God gave Abraham and Sarah an abundance of descendants, and used them in the lineage of Christ, as well (vs.12).

Sarah went through a journey of faith and doubt, obedience and resistance. God was faithful to Sarah throughout this journey, even when her faithfulness lacked. God never gave up on Sarah, and was patient with her through her doubts and fumbblings.

Go back and look at the promise of God's that you are doubting. Now take that to God, honestly tell Him what you are thinking and feeling about that situation, and then commit to believing Him in that situation, for He is faithful.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?



“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.”

Hebrews 11:23-26

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Galatians 3:26-27

Enduring Obedience in the Face of Persecution

“By faith Moses...” – Hebrews 11

When was the last time that you felt like someone was against you?

Both Moses and his parents dealt with situations in which many powerful people were against them, and because of the way they handled them, they were commended for their faith many years later.

Moses’ parents exhibited an amazing amount of faith, shown through their actions of hiding their infant son during a time in which parents were ordered to hand over their infant children to be killed. This is obviously a nightmare for any parent. How was it possible that they didn’t fear the king’s edict, as the verse says? Wasn’t it a terrifying and dangerous thing? Surely it was. It was because they had such a firm faith in God and a knowledge of God’s character as provider and protector.

While the worst did not occur for Moses’ parents, they did face repercussions of their actions. Their son was taken from their home and raised by strangers. Yet they submitted to God’s plan for their son’s life and for that they were counted faithful.

What must you sacrifice to God in faith?

Are you willing to make this sacrifice?

Moses’ parents had a great impact upon their son’s life and his future decisions, as well as the lives of many others through him. We later see this same trait of determined, even stubborn, obedience, even when the risk of persecution was great, in Moses.

Years later Moses followed the example of his parents and chose ill-treatment over an easier and more comfortable life. By doing this Moses exhibited not only a determination to be obedient to God, but also a true sense of identity. He recognized that above any other identity that had been offered him here on earth, he was one of God’s chosen children.

What false identity are you tempted to take on?

What real identity is yours in Christ?

Moses also demonstrated a proper perspective of time and circumstances. Look back to verses 25 and 26 of Hebrews 11. He

“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”
2 Corinthians 4:17-18

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 3:14

“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”
Jeremiah 29:11

recognized that although he could have had more earthly pleasures, fame, and luxuries, that these are temporary and do not compare with the eternal reward that would be his if he persevered, as we read about in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 and Philippians 3:14.

What is your typical reaction when you face the choice of ease or trouble?

If you are like most of us, your decision will nearly always be to choose the easy route. The decision to put oneself in a difficult or painful situation is not instinctive, and it is not logical. It requires a perspective of life that is different from what the world tells us. It requires a belief that God is all-powerful, supremely loving, and will work out His best plan in and through these difficult situations (Jeremiah 29:11).

The root of Moses’ and Moses’ parents’ right actions was a right way of thinking about God. We, ourselves, need to make sure that our way of thinking is aligned with God’s so that we are prepared to make right choices when faced with difficult decisions. This proper perspective of God also enables us to endure, even when we face persecution, which is another trait that Moses exhibits.

Moses’ obedience was a series of decisions. He made not just one choice, but many choices over many days and years to continue to be obedient. He could have changed his mind. He could have decided that he had had enough of difficulty and pain and returned to his cushy life in the palace. But he didn’t. Instead he continued to trust in God’s wisdom and plan.

In what area do you need to be persistent in your obedience??

The faith that Moses and his parents exhibited through obedience and endurance stemmed from a knowledge of God’s character and a gaze that was fixed properly. Hebrews 12:2 says “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

What is your gaze currently fixed on?

What do you need to do today to align your perspective with God’s?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

God's Use of Failures

"By Faith Rahab..." – Hebrews 11

"By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."
Hebrews 11:31

"So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."
Luke 14:33

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life."
Matthew 19:29

Rahab was an unlikely candidate for inclusion in a list of great heroes of the faith. She had at least three strikes against her. First of all, she was a female (not a coveted position in Old Testament times). Second, she was not a Hebrew (she wasn't included among God's chosen people). Thirdly, she was a prostitute. Enough said?

Rahab provides an example of faith to us despite these strikes against her. Despite the mistakes she made, she also exhibited a willingness to take great risks for God. Her boldness is admirable.

Rahab stood alone in her faith. Rahab's act of faith was not in response to what the crowd was doing or what seemed popular at the time. As far as we know she didn't have the support of any of her family or friends.

What emotions come to your mind when you think of standing up for something alone?

Rahab risked everything she had for what she believed was right. Another who showed this reckless abandon to Christ was the woman in Mark 14 who broke a costly alabaster vial of perfume in order to anoint Jesus. These women were ready to sacrifice everything in an instant in the recognition that there is One worthy of such a sacrifice.

We can learn much about the trait of reckless abandonment to Christ from Rahab's life. She turned from sin in order to be used by God. She did not hold on to any part of her former life. She was ready to, at a moment's notice, throw away all that was familiar to her in order to have God's best for her life. This is a scary thing to do. Regardless of what kind of life we lead, it is familiar, and it is always difficult to give that up for the unknown.

What is at risk if you obey God in what He has asked you to do?

Are you willing to take this risk?

A risk taken in obedience to God is always worth it! Jesus speaks of this fact in Matthew 19:29, when He talks about how the things we leave on account of Him will be rewarded to an extent far beyond what we sacrificed.

Rahab's reward was even more than she had requested or anticipated. Not only was her family saved in exchange for what she did, as she requested, but she received a new life, a new identity, when she came to live amongst the Israelites. God took Rahab from her former life and gave her a new one. Also, although Rahab never knew this while she was alive, she was also part of the line of Jesus. As with all of those

*"He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm."
Psalm 40:2*

*"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."
2 Corinthians 5:17*

listed in Hebrews 11, Rahab did not live to see the full results of her acts of faith. "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

Rahab had faith to turn from sin and trust that God had a better plan, and she did not let her former life of sin hold her back from obedience to God.

What event or sin from your past are you letting hold you back from obedience to God?

Below are some of our typical reactions. Which ones of these have you thought?

- God would not want to use me- He can find someone with a more suitable background.
 - My position in life is such that I will never have the same opportunities as most other people.
 - I would do great things for God if only _____
-

Along with the other heroes of the faith that are written about in Hebrews 11, Rahab had a right perspective of God, herself, and what is eternally valuable versus what is valued on earth. The immediate costs for her may have been great: she risked her income, possessions, home, freedom, and even her life. But the eternal rewards far outweighed these costs, just as is true in our own lives and the lives of the others told of in Hebrews 11, and Rahab recognized that truth.

Rahab's story demonstrates the significance of our decisions of whether or not to exercise faith. In her case it was a life or death matter, and even more than that, one of eternal significance. We do not know which of our decisions will be the same, but we can know that whether we choose to have faith or not, it will have an effect both on our own lives and the lives of countless others.

We can learn something about God from this story, as well. We see evidence of His redemptive nature many before Christ's death and resurrection. Even at this time that the Old Testament law was still in effect, and righteousness was based upon obedience to that law rather than on acceptance of Christ's free gift of salvation, God demonstrates His ability and willingness to take fallen, sinful individuals from the mud and mire of sin and redeem them, change them, and make them new (Psalm 40:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17).

God delights in using the unlikely, and He delights in making the old new. God did this for Rahab, and He desires to do it for each one of us, as well.

Take a moment right now and think about what way you are like Rahab. What strikes do you have against you? In what way are you unlikely to be used?

"And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."
2 Corinthians 12:9

Now, based upon God's use of Rahab despite her weaknesses, what does God desire to do with your life?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?





Other studies are available at
www.libertyonlineministries.com, including:

By Faith – (Hebrews 11)

One Another

The Armor of God – (Ephesians 6)

The Road to Happiness – Beatitudes (Matthew 5)

Strengthening Your Moral Fiber – Moral Purity (Proverbs 7)

One Plus One is One – Marriage as God intended it to be

Integrity: A Lost Discipline – (Psalm 15)

Practical Faith – (James)