

## The Faith Files

### The Letter to the Hebrews

August 25, 2001

#### 1. Hebrews 4:2-14

For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with **faith**. Now we who have **believed** enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest." It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the **faith** we profess.

- Hearing must be combined with faith or what is heard has no value. Faith without works is useless (see James 2:17). Therefore, to hear good news preached and not do something with it renders your hearing worthless. Is that an accurate deduction?
- Faith allows us to enter into the rest that God offers. God rested on the seventh day because He had faith that what He created was good and would sustain itself.
- The Sabbath that God intended seems to be tied to faith, where the people of God will rest from their labors and trust God. Yet faith doesn't mean a cessation of activity for faith requires action. How can you work in faith and rest at the same time? See my website store at [www.purposequest.com](http://www.purposequest.com) for the audio series "The Yoke's on You: Learning to Work and Rest at the Same Time." You can purchase it there or call my office at 1-800-737-9332, extension 03, to place an order.

- The people with Joshua did not enter God's rest due to disobedience. They did not have faith. Is unbelief disobedience? If it is, then we must decide to have faith and choose to trust God, which He commands, not suggests, that we do.
- Faith liberates us from our own work and into God's work. We can be like the burning bush—on fire but not consumed.

## 2. Hebrews 6:1

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of **faith** in God, (NIV)

- Faith in God is a foundational stone, not the deeper walk. Faith is assumed for someone to go on to maturity.

## 3. Hebrews 6:12

We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through **faith** and patience inherit what has been promised. (NIV)

- Is there any part of your faith that is lazy? Is your giving all that it should be? Are you current on all pledges to missionaries and building programs? Is your prayer life what it should be (you don't have to pray 60 minutes a day; set a realistic time limit, even if it's 10 minutes)?
- Faith and patience go hand in hand when you are believing for God's promises.
- That must mean that there is usually a time gap between understanding God's promise and seeing its fulfillment. Are you in a time gap right now? Your faith may not bring the promise, but equip you to wait for the promise. You are not believing to make it happen; it will happen. You are believing so that you won't give up during the wait.

## 4. Hebrews 10:22

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of **faith**, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (NIV)

- You can draw near to God with full assurance not that you're worthy, but in the full assurance that faith can provide. When you have sinned, you don't need to run *from* God but run *to* God. You can go in the full assurance of faith that if you confess your sins, He is just to forgive you (see 1 John 1)
- Faith has a cleansing element to it, for both the body and heart.

## 5. Hebrews 10:35-39

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by **faith**. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who **believe** and are saved. (NIV)

- The phrase "live by faith" can be found (see Romans 1:17, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 2:20, 3:17, and Hebrews 10:38). It has its roots in the Old Testament (see Habakkuk 2:4). In Habakkuk, living by faith is contrasted with pride. Is not living by faith a form of pride? How so?
- According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, the phrase "shrink back" is "perhaps a metaphor from lowering a sail and thus slackening the course and hence of being remiss in holding the truth." The Greek word for "shrink back," which is *hupostello*, has the prefix *hupo*, which means underneath and is suggestive of stealth.
- If you have made a commitment and when the going gets tough you back off from that faith commitment, are you guilty of "shrinking back?"
- Faith is the only thing that can save you in any situation.

## 6. Hebrews 11:1

Now **faith** is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (NIV)

- How can you be certain of what you do not see?
- Many were certain that they had seen something in faith, only to find themselves disappointed at the outcome. How can you be sure that you're sure?
- The answer is, "you can't." Then it wouldn't be faith! But we must be clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Lord has spoken something that we are hoping for. That means you can consider it over a long period of time, seek counsel from others, learn from your past faith "mis-adventures" and regularly ask the Lord to confirm what you've heard, or think you've heard from Him.

## 7. Hebrews 11:3

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. (NIV)

- I have often thought that it takes more faith to “believe” in evolution than it does in creation. To think that all I see is the result of a random explosion of gases is a tremendous faith statement. Evolutionists aren’t beyond the reach of faith; they are already walking in it!
- The foundation for the seen is the unseen, the spoken creative word of the Lord.

### 8. Hebrews 11:4

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. (NIV)

- This verse tells us three things about Abel. First, God accepted his sacrifice and not Cain’s, because Abel offered it in faith. Our sacrifices, whether they be service, music, or work, are not accepted by God because of their excellence or lack thereof, but because of the faith with which they are offered.
- Second, God spoke well of his offerings! We must not work for the praise that comes from men, but for the praise that comes from God. For the importance of this truth, please go to Matthew 23:5, Luke 16:15, John 5:41-44 and 12:43.
- Cain must have made a magnificent offering of the fruit of the ground but did not bring it in faith.
- Third, Abel is still speaking to us because of his faith and through our faith. We can only understand the story of Cain and Abel through faith. Our faith can outlive us and speak to those after us! That is a legacy worth leaving.

### 9. Hebrews 11:5

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. (NIV)

- God has ways of commending and honoring those who have faith. It is his commendation that we must strive to achieve.
- Enoch’s faith was so strong that he made a smooth transition from this life to the next. Your faith will help you face death and make it a smooth transition.

### 10. Hebrews 11:6

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. (NIV)

- It is impossible to please God! God sets the standard of what pleases Him and what doesn't. He is arbitrary in that sense. You can't get around that aspect of God. You can build, teach, cast out demons, but if those things aren't done in faith, God isn't interested.
- Faith is the great equalizer. You may not have as much talent, money, or "charisma" as the next person, but if you have faith, you are as acceptable to God as the next person.
- The one word that disturbs me in this verse and that is "earnestly." That involves energy, possibly a long time frame, and circumstances that may not be to my liking.
- God *always* rewards those who have faith. We never know how long it will take for the reward to arrive.

### **11. Hebrews 11:7**

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**. (NIV)

- We have seen many times that faith without action is useless. The list of characters in Hebrews 11 all did something with their faith and that is what qualified them for mention.
- Noah took what God had told him and built an ark and he did it in response to something the world hadn't seen up to that point: rain.
- It took Noah 100 years to build the ark. The reward of faith may take a bit of time.
- Noah inherited righteousness. That is an interesting way of looking at it. When you inherit something, you don't work for what you get. Someone else worked for it. You simply have to fulfill the requirements to receive it.
- If there is a "righteousness that comes by faith," are there other kinds of righteousness?

### **12. Hebrews 11:8-9**

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. (NIV)

- Here is another example of someone inheriting something through faith.

- God does not owe us a full explanation before we take the first steps of faith. Abraham set out without knowing where he was going. Are you holding back, waiting for a full explanation or understanding before you do what God is asking you to do?
- Abraham's land that he was to receive by faith was not a friendly place. Twice he had to leave because of drought. He had to buy a burial plot for his wife in the very land that God had promised Him. His son Isaac had to unstop and uncover the wells he had dug. Jacob had to leave with his sons due to a famine. You will be tested in regards to the promises God gives you, and the timetable for the inheritance belongs to God.
- Abraham had a nomad's dwelling – a tent – in the land that God was giving him. He truly was a pilgrim. So are we.
- The only thing you can do to receive an inheritance is to wait. But you can plan what you will do when you get it.

### **13. Hebrews 11:11**

By **faith** Abraham, even though he was past age-- and Sarah herself was barren-- was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. (NIV)

- The story of Isaac's birth is a fascinating one. Do you realize that God had Abram (exalted father) change his name to Abraham (father of a multitude) before he had his first son? In addition, He had him change his name when he was an old man and it appeared that the promise may not be fulfilled!
- The name change had God align Abraham's words with the promises of God and not the "reality" of the situation. What do you need to adjust in your speech that will acknowledge the reality of God instead of the reality of your perspective?
- Read Romans 4. When you are finished, read it again! One thing that stands out to me is that Abraham did not ignore the facts of his old age. He just didn't let it affect his faith in God. Are you ignoring the facts of your situation to maintain your faith? If so, you don't have to do that. You can say, "I'm dead, but God is faithful!"
- The source of Abraham's "fruit" was God's ability to deliver on His promise, not Abraham's natural abilities.

#### **14. Hebrews 11:13**

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. (NIV)

- I realized a few years ago that it is possible to die in faith—to see God’s promises and not receive them in this lifetime. I determined then that I would rather die in faith than live in presumption or unbelief.
- Presumption defined: to take or suppose to be true or entitled to belief, without examination or positive proof, or on the strength of probability.
- Unbelief defined: disobedience!
- I can presume to know how and when God is going to do something He has promised. There is an aspect of the unknown in faith. Presumption takes me to the land of the arrogant, for I have God all figured out.
- Most assume that presumption makes one adventurous due to rash confidence. I have found that presumption can make people cautious and inactive, waiting for God to do what He expects that person to do. Do you agree?
- I have found some people using prayer as a delay tactic to keep them from doing what God has told them to do.
- Do you have a presumptuous attitude in any area of your walk with the Lord?

#### **15. Hebrews 11:17-19**

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, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. (NIV)

- Read Genesis 22. Notice where Abraham told his servants, “We’ll be back.” What a faith statement! I have a message “What You See is What You Get” in my tape series “Faith: The Only Way to Please God.” You can order it from the store section of my website, [www.purposequest.com](http://www.purposequest.com), or by calling 1-800-737-9332 extension 03.
- Abraham “reasoned” from his focal point of faith. Faith is not unreasonable, if faith is your paradigm for living. For Abraham to sacrifice Isaac was a perfectly logical faith conclusion.

- Abraham had given his son to God so completely that he in a sense received him back from the dead when God stopped him from killing Isaac. You cannot give something to God in hopes that He won't take it; that's trying to manipulate God. In his heart, Abraham had killed Isaac. You can't take steps to give God something in hopes that He won't take it; you must give it to Him completely before you even hand it over.

### **16. Hebrews 11:20**

By **faith** Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. (NIV)

- Faith allows us to be optimistic about the future. Think of all the times in the Bible that things looked bleak or hopeless, but God intervened and turned it around in a matter of minutes. Consider
  1. Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22
  2. The famine in 2 Kings 7 which disappeared overnight!
  3. The disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24.

Are there any others you can think of?

- By faith, what can you say about your future or the future of your offspring?
- Can you bless someone today by faith like Isaac did?

### **17. Hebrews 11:21**

By **faith** Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. (NIV)

- Jacob carried on the tradition of his father Isaac by blessing his offspring as he died. What faith traditions can you start that your children can continue?
- The virus of faith is contagious; it is easily passed from one person to another.
- The doubt virus is contagious, too. Which virus has infected you?
- By faith, Jacob not only blessed but also worshipped. Jacob died in faith, weakened by age but leaning on his staff.

### **18. Hebrews 11:22**

By **faith** Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. (NIV)

- Faith without works is dead. Joseph knew that Israel would leave Egypt one day, but not in his lifetime. So he did something: he gave instructions about his bones.

- Wouldn't it be great to leave a faith legacy worded in your will? Why not work on that so your last words can be words of faith?
- It seems like people of faith always have something to say; it also seems like God gives people of faith a chance to say it.

### **19. Hebrews 11:23**

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. (NIV)

- What did Moses' parents see? No matter how "cute" you think a newborn may be, they all look the same for the most part. And they aren't much to look at for the first few days. When my wife saw our newborn son for the first time, she looked at me and said, "Maybe he'll be intelligent!"
- Moses' parents saw his life purpose by faith. They saw he was to be the deliverer of Israel. Pharaoh's command was that all male babies were to be thrown into the river. Moses' parents refused for they saw God's plan for Moses' life. They eventually complied, but put him in a basket first. That shows me the creativity of faith. God did the rest.
- What do you see for your children? The problems and weaknesses, or the purpose of God?

### **20. Hebrews 11:24-26**

By **faith** Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 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. (NIV)

- Again we see faith being continued from one generation to another. Religion can also be passed on to the next generation. What are you passing on?
- Notice the action words: refused, chose, regarded, looking ahead.
- Faith gives you something to look forward to: that keeps you focused on your priorities. Moses had to go through a lot to get to his reward. We will, too!
- Sin is pleasurable, especially in the short run; that is why people choose it. To choose faith means to delay the instinct for instant gratification and invest in the long run. Moses endured being mistreated because he was looking ahead.

- Your goals will cause you to look ahead and endure mistreatment now. Is it time to set some goals? Go to my website at [www.purposequest.com](http://www.purposequest.com) and find the heading Gold Mine Principles and the subheading Goals. Work on setting some faith goals today.

### **21. Hebrews 11:27-29**

By **faith** he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 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. By **faith** the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. (NIV)

- How can you see someone who is invisible? Only through the eyes of faith, through the eyes of the heart. Name every instance in the Bible where God opened someone's eyes:
  1. Abraham in Genesis 22 when he saw the ram;
  2. Jacob in Genesis 28 when he saw the ladder and the angels;
  3. Balaam in Numbers 22 when he saw the angel of the Lord standing in front of his donkey;
  4. Elisha's servant in 2 Kings 6 when he saw the hills full of horses and chariots;
  5. The disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24;
  6. The scales that fell from Saul's eyes in Acts 9.
- Can you add to that list? What does God want you to see that is right in front of you but you can't see right now?
- Moses was a man of faith. He did more with his faith than anyone else listed in Hebrews 11.

### **22. Hebrews 11:30-31**

By **faith** the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days. By **faith** the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. (NIV)

- Trivia question; How many times did the Joshua and the people walk around the walls of Jericho? Look it up in Joshua 6.
- How did Rahab know who the spies were when they came? Did God tell her? But she was, well, she was a woman involved in sacred prostitution! Truly it is possible to please God with faith.

### **23. Hebrews 11:32-39**

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through **faith** conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 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. 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. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. 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--the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their **faith**, yet none of them received what had been promised. (NIV)

- Faith brought a favorable outcome for some in the list above, but an unfavorable outcome for others. Faith doesn't guarantee a happy ending, but it does guarantee that God is happy. And if you bring pleasure to God, He will bring pleasure to you.
- I wonder how these people were "commended" for their faith? I would imagine God commended them in His own way, perhaps by mentioning them here. But probably in other tangible ways in His presence.
- They did not receive what was promised so that they could receive it along with us. What was their reward? The day of the Lord in Jesus!
- The world system does not honor faith. Mother Theresa and Princess Diana died around the same time. Who did the world honor? The woman of faith or the "princess?" Don't expect a parade in your honor in this life if you walk in faith; expect a parade in your honor in the life to come if you walk in faith.

### **24. Hebrews 12:2**

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. (NIV)

Jesus starts and finishes our faith projects. He is the alpha and omega of faith.

Jesus had faith as shown by his death. He did not raise Himself; the Father raised Him. He had faith that His Father would not let His body see corruption. He now asks us to have the faith He had, but He is willing to be involved with it from beginning to end.

You are not under pressure to find faith "projects." You must simply cooperate with the "projects" that God brings your way.

## 25. Hebrews 13:7

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their **faith**. (NIV)

- While you can imitate someone's faith, make sure you have faith when you do. The Egyptians tried to imitate Israel's faith to cross the Red Sea and were drowned. I have presumed to imitate someone else's mature expression of faith only to get in trouble. If I see someone giving a large amount of money, I don't have to match the amount. I am imitating their faith to give sacrificially. So my gift amount doesn't have to match their amount for me to have imitated their faith.