

Hebrews

Chapter 11

By Faith

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.² This is what the ancients were commended for.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.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.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.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.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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.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.¹² 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.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.¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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,¹⁸ even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.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.²² By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.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. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days. ³¹ By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. ³² And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. ³⁷ 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— ³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. ³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰ God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

11:1–12:29 Exhortations based on the preceding expositions of OT passages. (CSB)

11:1-2 The sacred writer here states the fundamental thought of this chapter, the most impressive section on the power of faith in his entire letter, if not in the whole Bible. He begins with a definition of faith: But faith is a conviction of mind concerning things hoped for, a certainty of things which are not seen. Faith, saving faith, that has accepted Jesus and His righteousness, is always and without exception a definite firmness of mind, a certain persuasion concerning the things which God has promised us in His Word for the purpose of having us place our hope upon them; it is an unalterable conviction of the heart regarding those things which we cannot see, which it is impossible for our eyes and for our reason and for our understanding to fathom and to know. Faith thus concerns things which are future, though they may have their beginning in this life; it is not an expectation of dreadful happenings, but a hope of blessed, glorious gifts; it keeps its peculiar form and characteristics, even when it is weak, a mere glowing taper; it is opposed to doubt and unbelief. Faith stands firm in all afflictions. Faith overcomes all weakness, for it is in the midst of tribulation and persecution that faith proves itself a persuasion of the heart that clings to God's promises. These qualities, or attributes, of faith the author now intends to bring out by referring to a number of examples of men

and women of the Old Testament: For in this lay the commendation of the men of old. It was on the ground of their possessing faith that the leading men of the Old Testament received the commendation of God, their deeds being recorded for the benefit of ages to come, of the generations of the New Testament. (Kretzmann)

11:1 FAITH – Pistis – It is the confident trust in the unseen reality of God’s present help. It occurs 24 times in this chapter. Only by faith are we in a right relationship with God. Only by faith can man live according to the invisible realities of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

“Faith is not only knowledge in the intellect, but also confidence in the will” (Ap V 183). (TLSB)

This verse says that faith gives a person the conviction that future, promised things are as real as if they had already happened. Faith causes a person to see things as they really are, though mere human senses cannot perceive them. This verse says nothing about the origin of faith. Lutherans distinguish themselves from others by insisting that faith is a work of God (John 6:29), a gift of God (Ephesians 2:80, produced by God (Colossians 2:12). Faith is never a mere decision. Even mere human faith is caused by an outside force. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

BEING SURE – hpostasis – Substance, assurance, having the sense of something foundational, something you can build on. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

“confidence.” Gk term describes something substantive. St Bernard of Clairvaux states, “The substance, he says, of thins hoped for, not a fantasy of empty conjectures. You hear, that is a substance; and therefore it is not allowed you in our faith, to suppose or oppose at your pleasure, nor to wander hither and thither amongst empty opinions, through devious errors. Under the name of substance something certain and fixed is put before you. You are enclosed in known bounds, shut in within fixed limits. For faith is not an opinion but a certitude.” (TLSB)

HOPE FOR – elpisomenon – Not wishful longings or selfish desires, but things God promises in his Word. God’s promises are the basis for our firm conviction. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

“If anyone wants a distinction between faith and hope, we say that the object of hope is properly a future event, but that faith is concerned with future and present things. Faith receives the forgiveness of sins offered in the promise in the present. (Ap V 191). Luth: “One of the noblest and most precious virtues of faith is to close one’s eyes to this, ingenuously to desist from exploring the why and the wherefore, and cheerfully to leave everything to God. Faith does not insist on knowing the reason for God’s actions, but it still regards God as the greatest goodness and mercy. Faith holds to that against and beyond all reason, sense, and experience, when everything appears to be wrath and injustice” (AE 43:52). (TLSB)

CERTAIN – elegchos – Proof or evidence like that which would be needed in a court of law. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

11:2 *the ancients*. Heroes of faith in the pre-Christian era, such as those listed in this chapter. (CSB)

Scripture testifies that the OT saints are righteous and pleasing to God. (TLSB)

WERE COMMENDED FOR – presbuteroi – They received God's commendation. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Many things, which thy hoped for and did not see, afterwards occurred and were seen, the event confirming faith. This is true though very little is said, as such, about faith in the OT. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:3 BY FAITH – pistei – faith that shows itself by taking God at his word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

The sacred writer begins his recital with a general reference, purposely ascribed, not to Adam or any individual believer, but to the believers of all times: By faith we perceive that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, that what is seen has not come into being out of things which appear. The existence of the world, its creation and preservation, is not a matter of conjecture, of idle guesswork, with the Christians, as it is with the heathen and with the unbelievers in general, who have astonished the world with theories that challenge the belief even of the credulous. We hold no such vain theories, the products of speculation based upon false assumptions. Had the visible universe really been formed out of materials which were subject to our inspection, or to the observation of any human beings, then our standpoint would bear the marks of foolish speculation. But the entire manner in which the world came into existence, all parts being adapted to one another and the whole to its purpose, is not a matter of reasonable consideration, but of faith. Faith is the knowledge which tells us that it was the almighty word of God which called things into being out of nothing, created something which was not there before. And the result of this creative act on the part of Almighty God is the existence and preservation of all things which make up the visible universe. Note: It is a matter of comfort to us to know that the same almighty God rules the universe today, and that His promise concerning the preservation of the world still stands, Gen. 8, 22. (Kretzmann)

created by the Word of God. Emphasizes that God spoke creation into existence. (TLSB)

what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. Just as God's Word created real, visible things from nothing, so our faith is certain, although it does not yet see the realities it confesses. (TLSB)

11:4 See Ge 4:2–5. (CSB)

BY FAITH ABEL – In taking up specific instances, the writer now mentions that of Abel first: By faith Abel offered to God a more adequate sacrifice than Cain, through which he was attested to as being righteous, God testifying upon his gifts; and through the same he, though dead, yet speaks. The better, the more excellent, the more adequate sacrifice of Abel, the peculiar value of his offering, was not due to the choice of the materials, but to the fact that he had faith, that he believed in the coming Messiah. It was on account of this faith, also, that God testified of him that he was righteous, Gen. 4, 3-5; Matt. 23, 35. God accepted the offering of Abel, indicating His complete satisfaction with the gift and the prayer which accompanied it; He had respect unto him and his offering, as the text in Genesis has it. Thus the faith of Abel was the reason why God imputed to him the righteousness of the coming Messiah, in whom he placed his hope. Just in what way God showed His acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, whether by having the smoke of its burning arise directly toward the sky, or by having fire fall down from heaven to devour his offering, or by revealing His attitude to Adam, as the priest of the family, we do not know. Of one thing we are sure, namely, that his offering was accepted because of his faith. And another fact is to be noted, namely, that the murder of Abel was not the end of his activity or influence. Though he is dead, yet he is ever speaking to us. His faith is a shining example to all men as to the manner of obtaining justification, as well as to the necessity of being faithful to the Lord, even if hatred and enmity on the part of the nearest relatives is the result, Gen. 4, 10; Heb. 12, 24. (Kretzmann)

more acceptable sacrifice. “In this life the good works of believers are imperfect and impure because of sin in the flesh, nevertheless they are acceptable and well pleasing to God. However, the Law does not teach how and why the good works of believers are acceptable. It demands a completely perfect, pure obedience if it is to please God. But the Gospel teaches that our spiritual offerings are acceptable to God through faith for Christ's sake” (FC SD VII 22). (TLSB)

commended as a righteous man. Both brothers brought offerings to the Lord: Cain from the fruits of the soil, and Abel from the firstborn of his flock. The chief reason for the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice was that he offered it “by faith.” It is implied that Cain's sacrifice was rejected because he offered it without faith, as a mere formality (see note on Ge 4:3–4). (CSB)

God accepts both the sacrifice and the sacrificer. (TLSB)

he still speaks. Abel's example, recorded in Scripture, still speaks to us. (TLSB)

11:5 Enoch. See Ge 5:18–24. (CSB)

Next is cited the example of Enoch: By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death, and he was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had had this testimony, that he was well pleasing to God. Of Enoch very little is said in Scriptures, Cp. Gen. 5, 22-24; Jude, vv. 14. 15. Since the earliest days the children of God, the descendants of Adam that trusted in the mercy of the coming Messiah, had

caused the proclamation of this Gospel-truth to be made in their midst, and had taught it to their children. Thus Enoch had learned the truth and the way of salvation, thus had he come to faith; and therefore he was well-pleasing to God. In his case, therefore, the Lord determined to manifest His good pleasure in a particularly extraordinary way. He removed him from the earth, in order that he might not see death; in some form or manner the Lord took his body away, up to the abode of the blessed. And all this because he believed and led a godly life in agreement with his faith, because he walked with God, as the Hebrew text has it, Gen. 5, 22. 24. He was translated, he was removed, he was no longer found. It may well be that his relatives searched for him, as the children of the prophets did for Elijah, 2 Kings 2, 16, and that they eventually received information from the Lord as to the method of their relative's removal from the earth. All this was the result of his faith: For without faith it is impossible to please God well; for he that comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He becomes a rewarder to those that diligently seek Him. The author again uses the picture of a priest's or a worshiper's drawing nigh to God, chap. 7, 25; 10, 22. Such a person that worships God in truth will not only believe in the existence of God, but will know also that God will in mercy reward those that seek Him, that His gift to them is eternal life through Jesus Christ the Savior. It is he whose Christianity is not a matter of mere form and of outward ceremonies, but a true matter of the heart, he whose faith is of the kind that does not grow weary in seeking the Lord and His holy will, that will become a partaker of the Lord's merciful reward. (Kreztmann)

taken him away. To God's presence (see note on Ge 5:24; cf. Ps 49:15; 73:24). (CSB)

11:6 *without faith it is impossible to please God.* That Enoch pleased God is proof of his faith. (CSB)

“Only justified people, who are led by the Spirit of Christ, can do good works. Without faith and Christ as Mediator, good works do not please” (Ap V 251). (TLSB)

believe that he exists. Faith must have an object, and the proper object of genuine faith is God. (CSB)

Saving faith trusts both in God's existence and in His mercy for Christ's sake. Luther: “It is evident that in theology the work does not amount to anything without faith, but that faith must precede before you can do works.... The sacrifice of Abel was better because he believed. But because Cain was an ungodly man and a hypocrite, he performed a work that was moral, or rather one that was reasonable, by which he sought to please God. Therefore the work of Cain was hypocritical and faithless; in it there was no faith in grace but only a presumption about his own righteousness” (AE 26:264). (TLSB)

who earnestly seek him. See Jer 29:13. (CSB)

11:7 *Noah.* See Ge 5:28–9:29. (CSB)

The example of Noah teaches the same lesson: By faith Noah, after being informed by God concerning that which was as yet not seen, with pious reverence constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Gen. 6, 8-9, 29. Noah was perfect in his generations, in the midst of a world which blasphemed the Lord and scorned His Word: he walked with God and found grace in the sight of the Lord. For this reason the Lord gave him information, issued a warning to him concerning the plans which he had with regard to the world and its punishment. While Noah, at God's command, constructed the ark, it was always with trust in things which had as yet not come to pass. It is very probable that he had to endure the scorn and derision of the unbelievers on all sides for his act of building a ship on dry ground. But Noah continued his work in pious reverence, combined with cautious forethought, knowing that this ark would serve for the saving of his household, or family, for since the Lord had first spoken with him, he had married, and his three sons had grown up and taken wives also. By this exhibition of his faith, Noah condemned the unbelieving children of the world, for by this time the congregation of believers had dwindled down to include only his family. The faith of Noah made the unbelief of the scoffers stand out all the more strongly. Incidentally it made him an heir of the righteousness which is given to men by faith. He became the possessor, the owner of its spiritual blessings, the righteousness of the coming Savior was imputed to him by God, not being earned by the act of his faith, but being accepted by this faith. It is the very same process which obtains today in bringing salvation to men. (Kreztmann)

By his faith. When the flood came, God's word was proved to be true, Noah's faith was vindicated, and the world's unbelief was judged. (CSB)

in reverent fear. More afraid of disobeying God than of losing other people's favor. (TLSB)

condemned the world. Through the ark, he showed that God's threat of destruction was real. (TLSB)

righteousness that comes by faith. Noah expressed complete trust in God and his word, even when it related to "things not yet seen" (v. 1), namely, the coming flood. Thus Noah also fitted the description of God's righteous ones who live by faith (10:38). His faith in God's word moved him to build the ark in a dry, landlocked region where it was inconceivable that there would ever be enough water to float the vessel. (CSB)

11:8-12 Since he was the father of the Old Testament believers, the example of Abraham is treated at length, no fewer than five points in which his faith stood out prominently being given in this chapter: By faith Abraham, being called to go forth to a place which he was destined to receive as an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing where he was going. Gen. 12, 1-4. When the Lord issued His special call to Abraham, the latter was living with his father Terah at Haran. The call of God influenced his heart and mind to such an extent that he was no longer identified in any manner with the idolatry practiced in his father's house, and that his faith wrought in him a strong obedience to the call of the Lord. It may not have been an easy matter for Abraham,

who at that time was already seventy-five years old and possessed great wealth, to leave the home of his father for an unknown country, where, moreover, idolatry was practiced just as badly as in Mesopotamia. But his faith in the promise of the Messiah gave him power to believe also the promise concerning the land of his inheritance on earth. (Kretzmann)

Abraham's faith was put to a severe test at this time: By faith he sojourned in the Land of Promise as in a foreign country, living in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he was waiting for the city having foundations, whose architect and builder is God. All these facts are recorded in the Book of Genesis. Having come into the Land of Promise, the land of Canaan, Abraham, instead of being given the country for his possession as he might have expected from the words of the Lord, did not get so much as a foot of land to call his own, being even obliged, at the death of Sarah, to buy a place of burial for her from the children of Seth. He lived the life of a nomad, dwelling in tents, and moving from one place to another as occasion offered. This was the lot also of his son Isaac and of his grandson Jacob. They lived in the land which God had promised to them as their inheritance, and yet it was a strange land to them, a country in which they were merely suffered as sojourners. This surely was a strong test for the faith of the patriarchs. But Abraham was equal to the test. Although possessing not a foot of soil in Canaan for more than fifty years and then only a small cave with the adjoining land, he looked upon this country as his possession and would not permit Eliezer to suggest taking Isaac back to Mesopotamia. In this faith Abraham was sustained by his firm hope of the future glory, which he knew to be his by virtue of the Messiah's merits. He might be obliged, as long as he lived here on earth, to live the life of a nomad, but this did not shake his firm hope of entering the heavenly Jerusalem, the city which was designed and built by God for those that love Him. That is the hope of the believers of all times; for they have here no continuing city, but they seek the one to come. (Kretzmann)

The faith of Abraham was shared also by his wife Sarah, though not in the same measure: By faith also Sarah received strength to conceive and was delivered of a son though past the usual age, since she counted Him faithful that had promised. Gen. 18, 12. 15. When Abraham came to Canaan, Sarah was about sixty-five years old and had not only been barren, but was now past the age when she might expect to bear a child in agreement with the course of nature, Gen. 18, 11. For twenty-four years she waited for the promise of God to be fulfilled, and her faith was sometimes not equal to the strain, as when she gave Abraham her maid Hagar as a second wife, and when she laughed at the final definite announcement of the Lord, Gen. 18, 12. 13. But the Lord's gentle rebuke upon this last occasion seems to have had the beneficial effect of banishing all doubts from her heart, simply because she relied upon God's promise. It was this faith, growing, as it did, out of the true faith in the promised Messiah, which was ever connected with God's announcement to Abraham, that gave her strength to become a mother at the age of eighty-nine, against the course of nature. (Kretzmann)

The result of this unwavering reliance upon God's word and promise was truly remarkable: Wherefore also there were begotten of one, and of one as good as dead,

these (descendants) as the stars of the heaven for multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable. In such a miraculous manner there was founded through Sarah, herself by nature doubly incapable for that purpose, a family. And another strange point is this, that Abraham at that time also was beyond the age when a man is ordinarily able to beget children; his generative power, according to the usual course of nature, had waned. Because God's promise, however, was so certain, the result was that the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac, the children of Israel, finally were like the stars of the sky or the sand at the seashore for multitude. Gen. 21, 2; 22, 17; 32, 12. Thus was the faith of both Abraham and Sarah vindicated most wonderfully. (Kreztmann)

11:8 Abraham. Presented in the NT as the outstanding example of those who live "by faith" and as the "father of all who believe" (Ro 4:11–12, 16; Gal 3:7, 9, 29). (CSB)

called. See Ge 12:1–3. His faith expressed itself in obedience (see note on Ge 12:4). (CSB)

kaloumenos – called out by the voice of God addressing him. Noah had the same call to build an ark. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

TO GO – exerchomai – To go out. By faith Abraham went out from earthly security. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

a place he would later receive. Canaan. (CSB)

OBEYED AND WENT – hpakousen – By leaving his homeland and traveling to an unknown destination. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

His immediate obedience is proof of his faith. Bruce remarks: "He (Abraham) would not have obeyed the divine call had he not taken God at His word: his obedience was the outward evidence of his inward faith. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

did not know where he was going. He did not go in blind faith, but in complete confidence in God's trustworthiness. (CSB)

ma epistamuenos tou erchetai – No map. No pre-determined plan. No written destination. No attractive travel brochure promising "green pastures." (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Guthrie remarks: "He left behind the 'seen' world of his former days and launched into a project involving an unseen inheritance." Westcott says: "The future was safe in God's counsel." Lenski: "He went wholly and completely on trust." (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:9 PROMISED LAND – epaggelias – Land of promise. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

LIKE A STRANGER IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY; HE LIVED IN TENTS – allotrian – He never own a bit of it (Acts 7:5), except a field near Hebron which he bought from Ephron the Hittite for the purpose of his family’s cemetery (Gen. 23). He moved around in his tent from place to place. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Bengel remarks: “Nowhere else are sons called joint-heirs with their parents but merely heirs.” Guthrie: “Faith made a reality of what was not even apparent.” Westcott: “Abraham dwelt throughout the time of his sojourn in tents, so declaring that that which was to be permanent was not yet attained.” Lenski: “He remained a foreigner, who was permitted to remain in the land as an alien by those who as citizens owned and controlled it.” Bruce: “To Abraham the promise of God was as substantial as its realization.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:10 *city with foundations*. Speaks of permanence in contrast to the tents in which the patriarch lived (v. 9). This city is “the heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22), “the city that is to come” (13:14) and “the new Jerusalem” (Rev 21:2–4, 9–27). (CSB)

The heavenly Jerusalem (cf Gal 4:26). (TLSB)

polin tous themelious – He was given to see, by faith, something far greater, far more lasting than the real estate of Canaan. No more portable habitats of skins stretched over poles with all the security of stakes driven into whatever soil was available. The city Abraham saw by faith was anchored to stay (12:22; 13:14) (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Here and Revelation 21:14 and 19, the new Jerusalem has permanent foundations. The tents of life are temporary. By faith everlasting life was as real to Abraham as if he were already there. Westcott remarks: “There is something particularly attractive about the quality of faith which sees stability in other than material things.” Correct. Sinful human nature is ever so materialistic. Also that of Christians. They need to be reminded often of their eternal inheritance which does not fade away. Bruce: “Abraham kept his eyes fixed on the well-establish city if God which was to be revealed in the time of fulfillment.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

builder. Cf. Ps 147:2 and NIV text note on Isa 62:5. (CSB)

11:11 BY FAITH – Faith enabled Abraham to become a father even though he was old and Sarah had never been able to have children. Abraham trusted that God would keep his promise. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Sarah ... was barren. Probably referring to the fact that she was far past childbearing (Ge 18:11–12; see note on Ge 11:30). (CSB)

Guthrie says: “It is perhaps surprising to find Sarah spoken of as an example of faith, for according to Genesis she was more conspicuous as an example of doubt...Her mockery must have turned to faith long before Isaac was born.” Westcott: “Sarah, who

was at first unbelieving, was at last inspired with her husband's faith by his example and influence. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

she considered Him faithful. John Chrysostom: “While her laughter indeed was from unbelief, her fear [was] from Faith.... When unbelief had been cleared out, Faith came in its place” (NPNF 1 14:471). (TLSB)

11:12 *as good as dead.* Because he was 100 years old (see Ge 21:5; Ro 4:19). (CSB)

nenekromenou – having died. Here is impossibility compounded. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Guthrie: “Teeming life was to come from apparent death, a superb example of God's ways differing from men's estimate of what is possible.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

stars in the sky ... sand on the seashore. See Ge 13:16 and note; 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; 1Ki 4:20. (CSB)

11:13-16 These verses might be considered a sort of parenthesis because verses 17-19 return to the theme of Abraham. These verses might be used as a text on the occasion of the death of a Christian. OT saints looked forward to the fulfillment of promises in time and therefore looked forward to everlasting life. NT Christians look forward to the fulfillment of promises after death and therefore look forward to everlasting life. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:13 ALL THESE – Refers to the people mentioned in verse 4. They did not see the fulfillment of heaven in their lifetime but in faith were assured of the promise. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

The word “all” means all OT believers. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The sacred writer here shows that his definition of faith applies well in the case of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob: These all died in keeping with their faith, although they had not become partakers of the promises, but had seen them from afar and hailed them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. As the patriarchs had believed during their lives, so they died in their faith, as it behooved men that had seen the day of the Lord, the coming salvation, from afar, through the promises of the Lord, John 8, 56. They were so firmly persuaded that God would fulfill His word in every particular that they actually saw the fulfillment. They hailed the promises from afar, as people on board of a ship may wave recognition to a group of friends on shore. The fact that the Gospel-promises were not fulfilled while they lived, and that they did not see the Messiah in person, did not influence their faith. They cheerfully confessed and called themselves strangers and pilgrims here on earth, a fact for which their being sojourners in the Land of Promise was a type. Cp. Gen. 23, 4; 47, 9; Ps. 39, 12; 1 Pet. 1, 1; 2, 11. (Kretzmann)

THINGS PROMISED – *Tas epaggelias* – This takes into account not just the promises, but also the very content, the substance, of the those promises. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

saw them and welcomed them from a distance. By faith they saw—dimly—these heavenly realities and were sure that what they hoped for would ultimately be theirs (see v. 1). (CSB)

aliens and strangers on earth. Their true home was in heaven. (CSB)

Bengel remarks: “The worldly cleave to the world; believers scarcely cling to it in any part.” He observes that this verse plainly refers to John 8:56. Guthrie says: “It is all of a piece with the underlying principle of the epistle that it is the heavenly and not the earthly things which are of most importance.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:14-16 This open confession of the patriarchs, as evidenced in their lives, is further discussed: For they that say such things plainly show that they are in search of a fatherland. The acknowledgment and confession of the patriarchs that they were strangers and sojourners here on earth, that this world was not their home country, made it very evident that the true homeland must be elsewhere, that they are eagerly awaiting their entrance into that promised place. They think of, have in view, and are making for, a land which they can call their own, which is their own by the gift of God. Their entire attitude agreed with this state of mind: And if, indeed, they had cherished memories of that land which they had left, they would have had opportunity to return; but now they aspire after a better one, which is the heavenly one. If at any time during their sojourn in Canaan and also in Egypt the patriarchs had had regrets on account of their having left Mesopotamia, if they had cherished fond memories of that earthly country from which Abraham had gone forth, if their sighing had concerned itself with a mere earthly paradise, then it would have been an easy matter for them to return to their former homeland. But it was not an earthly country that their faith was aspiring after with such eager sighing, but the promised heavenly land, the city whose possession was assured by virtue of the Messiah’s merits. Thus the cordial relationship between God and them is brought out: Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. Because the faith of the patriarchs in the promises of God was so implicit, because they credited His promises even though they themselves did not actually become partakers of them while living here on earth, therefore God was not ashamed of them, did not hesitate to confess them, was willing to be called their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Ex. 3, 15. For this reason, also, He was preparing for them a city, the heavenly Jerusalem, the mansions above, which would in every way satisfy the hopes and expectations they had held all their lives, John 14, 1-3. This is also the goal of the hopes, the expectation of the faith, of all believers to this day - Jerusalem, the city fair and high. (Kretzmann)

11:14 ARE LOOKING FOR - This remains the confession of God’s people while on earth. They are never completely at home in the surroundings of this present world. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

country of their own. That better, heavenly country (v. 16). (CSB)

Lit, “fatherland,” the country of our heavenly Father. (TLSB)

patris – It is the fatherland or one’s native county to which one belongs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

Patris, which occurs only here in the epistles, means “fatherland.” Under ordinary circumstances people speak of a fatherland as a country from which they have come. These people set their hearts on (that’s the meaning of epizateo) a fatherland to which they were going. RSV and NKJV translate “a homeland.” Bengel says: “Citizens of the world do not call themselves strangers in the world.” Guthrie says of patris: “It means a fatherland where the nation can find its roots.” Westcott observes: “As strangers’ they acknowledge that they were in a foreign lands; as sojourners’ that they had no permanent possession, no rights of citizenship. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:15 TO RETURN – Bruce aptly points out: “When Abraham’s servant suggested to his master that Isaac might go to Mesopotamia in person to persuade his bride to come to Canaan, Abraham said: ‘Beware that thou bring not my son thither again’ (Gen 24:6).” Bengel reminds us that the patriarchs had this opportunity for many years. Guthrie observes: “This is all the more remarkable when it is recognized that the land they left behind had reached a more advanced stage of civilization than the land of Canaan to which they went. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:16 WERE LONGING - oregontai – continual, ongoing striving or desire. It was a vision of something better than where they were. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

GOD IS NOT ASHAMED TO BE CALLED THEIR GOD – Dio ouk epaischunetai autos o Theos – God is not ashamed of them. In grace, God gives his name to us, putting it on in Baptism, bringing us to faith in Christ and making us members of Christ and of his family. (Concordia Journal – July 2001)

Bengel observes: “Not only is he not ashamed, but glories in it.” We agree with those who consider epikaleisthai epexegetical: “God is not ashamed of them, namely, to be called their God.” How often did not God identify Himself as “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” The person who trusts God’s promises can put his own name there. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

prepared a city for them. City (v. 10) and country are interchangeable in the concluding chapters of this letter (vv. 9–10, 14–16; 13:14). The ultimate reality is represented by the new Jerusalem in John’s vision of the believer’s eternal state (see Rev 21:2). (CSB)

A tent is living place but only temporary. A city is a dwelling place, but permanent, in comparison. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

11:17 See Ge 22. (CSB)

his one and only son. See Ge 22:2, 12, 16; Jn 3:16; Ro 8:32. (CSB)

What God asked him must have seemed not only incredible, but completely contrary to all that God had promised. (PBC)

11:18 YOUR OFFSPRING – From Isaac would come not only physical Israel, but spiritual Israel, composed of all true believers in Christ, Abraham’s greatest seed. To sacrifice Isaac seemed to mean canceling the fulfillment of that glorious promise. (PBC)

God promised descendants through Isaac. (TLSB)

11:19 *God could raise the dead.* So strong was Abraham’s faith that he actually believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead if necessary, an event that did occur figuratively when the substitute ram was provided (Ge 22:13). (CSB)

he did receive him back. John Chrysostom: “By means of the ram [Abraham] received him again, having slain it in his stead. But these things were types: for here it is the Son of God who is slain” (NPNF 1 14:478). (TLSB)

11:20 See Ge 27:27–40. (CSB)

Isaac, blind and aged, could not see which son was kneeling before him, but with the eyes of faith he could see what the future held for each of them. (PBC)

11:21 See Ge 47:29–31; 48:8–20. (CSB)

Jacob in his early days had leaned too heavily on his own resources and skill, but on his deathbed he leaned on his staff in worshipful trust in God’s faithfulness. (PBC)

11:22 See Ge 50:24–25. Jacob (v. 21) and Joseph are additional examples of those whose faith is no less strong at death than in life (v. 13). (CSB)

Joseph, though he could have had his body impressively preserved in some Egyptian pyramid, looked ahead with eyes of faith through the mist of 400 years to Canaan. (PBC)

11:23–29 See Ac 7:20–44. (CSB)

11:23 *Moses’ parents.* See Ex 6:20; Nu 26:58–59. (CSB)

not afraid of the king's edict. They feared God more than the evil king. Cf Ex 1:17, 21. (TLSB)

Joy at their baby's birth must have been dampened by concern when they saw it was a boy. Anxiety must have shadowed everyday of those three months as they struggled to keep quiet and secret a growing baby boy. But they did it – “by faith.” (PBC)

no ordinary child. See note on Ex 2:2. (CSB)

Exodus says, “he was a fine child.” (PBC)

ESV has “fine.” Hebrew tob is used for in Genesis 1 to describe God's “good” creation. (TLSB)

the king's edict. To kill all Israelite males at birth (Ex 1:16, 22). (CSB)

11:24 MOSES...REFUSED – It says, he said no to the elite position and exalted privileges he had as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith he did this, knowing what his decision would cost him. Deliberately he shook off the position of royal blood and chose identification with the [people of God. (PBC)

11:25 *pleasures of sin.* The luxury and prestige in Egypt's royal palace. (CSB)

From his decision came mistreatment; what the people of God were going through fell on him. For Moses to remain in Pharaoh's court even after knowing that God had called him to rescue Israel would have been sin. Sin's pleasures are only for a short time when compared to what God has in store for his people. (PBC)

11:26 *for the sake of Christ.* Although Moses' understanding of the details of the Messianic hope was extremely limited, he chose to be associated with the people through whom that hope was to be realized. (CSB)

The Israelites suffered in Egypt because they hoped in the Messiah. (TLSB)

treasures of Egypt. The priceless treasures of King Tutankhamun's tomb alone included several thousand pounds of pure gold. (CSB)

11:27 *By faith he left Egypt.* Probably referring to his flight to Midian in the Sinai peninsula when he was 40 years old (Ex 2:11–15; Ac 7:23–29). (CSB)

not fearing the king's anger. Exodus indicates that Moses was afraid (Ex 2:14) but does not expressly say of whom. And it tells us that he fled from Pharaoh when Pharaoh tried to kill him (Ex 2:15) but does not expressly say that he fled out of fear. The author of Hebrews capitalizes on these features of the account to highlight the fact that, in his fleeing from Pharaoh, Moses was sustained by his trust in God that the liberation of Israel would come and that he would have some part in it. (CSB)

Though at first afraid (Ex 2:14), Moses fled in faith from Egypt, intending to return when the time was right. (TLSB)

he persevered. For 40 years in Midian (Ac 7:30). (CSB)

saw him who is invisible. See vv. 1, 6. (CSB)

11:28 See Ex 12. (CSB)

Passover. Gk *pascha*. Cf 1Co 5:7. (TLSB)

sprinkled. Or, “poured.” (TLSB)

11:29 See Ex 14–15. The third and final 40-year period of Moses’ life was spent leading the Israelites through the desert. At the age of 120 years he died in Moab (Dt 34:1–7). (CSB)

11:30 Moses’ place as leader was taken by Joshua, who brought the people of Israel into the land of promise. (CSB)

Jericho. The first great obstacle to their conquest of the land was captured by faith without a battle (Jos 6). (CSB)

11:31 *the prostitute Rahab.* A designation describing her way of life prior to her newly found faith (Jos 2:8–11; 6:22–25); also a testimony to God’s boundless grace that can reach down and redeem and raise any sinner to eternal dignity. (CSB)

God will judge the sexually immoral (13:4), yet God changed Rahab through repentance, faith, and action. (TLSB)

welcomed the spies. See Jas 2:25. (CSB)

11:32–38 There were many more heroes of faith before the coming of Christ, and much more could be written of them. Only a small sampling is given, representing all types of men and women of faith. The great quality they had in common was that of overcoming “through faith” (v. 33). (CSB)

11:32 *to tell.* Translates the masculine form of a Greek verb, indicating that the author of Hebrews was a man (see Introduction: Author). (CSB)

Indicates that Hebrews was likely preached as a sermon. (TLSB)

time would fail me. The many others who could be mentioned show that those already listed are esp important. (TLSB)

Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah. See Jdg 4:6–5:15; 6:11–8:35; 11:1–12:7; 13:24–16:31; 1Sa 12:11 and NIV text note there. (CSB)

Gideon defeated Midian's mighty army with a handful of 300 men. Barak along with Deborah was God's man of the hour to defeat the Canaanites. Samson defeated the Philistines a number of times. Jephthah faced the Ammonites and defeated them with God's power. (PBC)

Samuel and the prophets. See Ps 99:6; Jer 15:1; Ac 3:24; 13:20. (CSB)

11:33 *mouths of lions.* Cf. Daniel in the lions' den (Da 6). (CSB)

11:34 *quenched the fury of the flames.* Cf. Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, in the fiery furnace (Da 3). (CSB)

ESCAPED THE EDGE OF THE SWORD – Elijah and others moved among drawn swords which could not reach them (1 Kings 19:1-3). (PBC)

weakness was turned to strength. Through God's help (see Ro 8:26; 2Co 12:9). (CSB)

11:35 *Women received back their dead.* Cf. the widow of Zarephath (1Ki 17:17–24) and the Shunammite woman (2Ki 4:8–36). (CSB)

were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Strongly reminiscent of the heroic Maccabean Jewish patriots of the second century B.C. (see 2 Maccabees 7). But the description applies also to countless believers, known and unknown, who demonstrated their faith in God by persevering in the face of harsh trials and afflictions. (CSB)

May refer to 2Macc 6:18–7:42, where Eleazar, his six brothers, and his mother refuse to partake in pagan sacrifices. (TLNB)

release. From prison and torture, if they would deny the faith. (TLNB)

rise again. They retained their faith and eternal life despite torture. (TLNB)

11:37 *They were stoned.* Men like Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, who were put to death for declaring the truth (2Ch 24:20–22; Lk 11:51). See also Introduction to Jeremiah: Author and Date. (CSB)

sawed in two. Perhaps refers to Isaiah, who, according to tradition, met this kind of death under wicked King Manasseh (see Introduction to Isaiah: Author). (CSB)

Some ancient writers say Isaiah suffered this. See ANF 1:259; 3:716. (TLNB)

11:38 *the world was not worthy.* The world despised God’s saints, even though they were truly worthy of praise. Only God counts them worthy through faith to receive His promises. (TLSB)

11:39–40 *did not receive what was promised.* They did not see and hear the promised Messiah. *made perfect.* The full resurrection, which will come for the OT saints and for us on the Last Day. (TLSB)

11:39 *all commended for their faith.* Not all the heroes of faith experienced immediate triumph over their circumstances, but all were blessed by God. (CSB)

11:40 *God had planned something better.* The fulfillment for them, as for us, is in Christ who is “the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11:25–26). (CSB)

only together with us would they be made perfect. All persons of faith who had gone before focused their faith on God and his promises. The fulfillment of God’s promises to them has now come in Jesus Christ, and their redemption too is now complete in him. (CSB)

Ch 11 Faith trusts even without sight what God has set forth in His Word. True faith is active in love and is steadfast under persecution. By His resurrection, Christ conquered death and now provides His Holy Spirit to strengthen us. • “Lord, be our light when worldly darkness veils us; Lord, be our shield when earthly armor fails us; And in the day when hell itself assails us, Grant us Your peace, Lord.” Amen. (LSB 659:3) (TLSB)