

I OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

- PURPOSE:** To present the **sufficiency** and **superiority** of Jesus Christ.
- AUTHOR:** The Holy Spirit, through Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, Philip, Priscilla, and others.
- TIMELINE:** Before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Best dates are 67-69 A.D.
- SETTING:** Jewish Christians were probably undergoing persecution, socially and physically, from both the Jews and Romans. Although the last days had begun, Christ had not returned to establish his Millennial Kingdom and the people needed to be reassured that Christianity was true and that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

BLUEPRINT:

- 1. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST (1:1-10:18)**
 - a) Christ is greater than angels
 - b) Christ is greater than Moses
 - c) Christ is greater than the Old Testament priesthood
 - d) The new covenant is greater than the old covenant
- 2. THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH (10:19-13:25)**

MEGATHEMES OF HEBREWS

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
Christ is superior	Hebrews reveals Jesus’ true identity as God and the ultimate authority. He is greater than any religion and greater than any angel. He is superior to any Jewish leader and priest. He is the complete revelation of God.	Jesus alone can forgive your sin. He has secured your forgiveness and salvation by His death on the cross. You can find peace with God and the real meaning of life by believing in Christ.
High Priest	In the OT, the High Priest represented the Jews before God. Jesus Christ links us with God. There is no other superior way to reach God. Because Jesus lived a sinless life, he is the perfect substitute to die for our sin. He is our perfect representative with God.	Jesus guarantees our access to God the Father, interceding for us so we can boldly come before Him with our needs. When we are weak we can confidently come to God for forgiveness and help.

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
Sacrifice	Christ's sacrifice was the ultimate fulfillment of all that the OT sacrifices represented; God's forgiveness for sin. Because Christ is the perfect sacrifice for our sin, our sins are completely forgiven: past, present and future.	Christ removed sin which barred us from God's presence and fellowship. By believing in Him we are no longer guilty, but cleansed and made whole. His sacrifice makes the way for us to have eternal life.
Maturity	Though we are saved from sin when we believe in Christ, we are given the task to go on and grow in our faith. Through our relationship with Christ we can live blameless lives, be set aside for His special use and develop maturity.	The process of maturing in our faith takes time. Daily commitment and service produce maturity. When we are mature in our faith, we are not easily swayed or shaken.
Faith	Faith is confident trust in God. God's salvation is in his son Jesus, who is the only one who can save us from our sin.	If you trust in Jesus Christ for your complete salvation, He will transform you completely. A life of obedience and complete truth is pleasing to God.

II BACKGROUND

Having shown the discouraged Hebrew Christians that Christ is superior to the angels, superior to Moses, superior to any high priest that was ever commissioned, and that the New Covenant is far superior to the Old Covenant, the writer of **Hebrews** now moves on to the last subject of superiority, which is faith.

In the study of soteriology, the central element of a righteous relationship with God is faith. We can study the things of the world and excel in its knowledge, but without faith, we are still separated from the One with infinite knowledge. We will see, that faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has not only saved all of those since His resurrection 1,985 years ago, but it also saved those who trusted God before Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. It is faith and faith only that saves (**Ephesians 2:8-10; Habakkuk 2:4; Hebrews 11:6**). In this week's lesson, the author of **Hebrews** helps us understand what saving faith is all about.

Prior to discussing faith and presenting some of the members of the "Hall of Faith", the writer warns the Jewish Christians of the danger of a willful, deliberate rejection of Christ's offer of salvation. He emphasizes, that the now obsolete Old Covenant has no saving power and without the Blood of Jesus to cover their sins, they are still under condemnation and God's wrath (**John 3:36**). Jesus stated that He is the only way to the Father in John 14:6. Thanks be to God that He provided a way to escape eternal separation from God.

III SCRIPTURE

PUNISHMENT FOR SIN (HEBREWS 10:26-31)
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The author gives yet another warning about the deliberate rejection of Christ's offer of salvation (i.e., God's most precious gift). To do this is to push away the work of the Holy Spirit who communicates to us God's saving love. This warning was specifically given to Jewish Christians who were tempted to reject Christ for Judaism, but it applies to anyone who rejects Christ for another religion, or having understood Christ's atoning work, deliberately turns away from it (Numbers 15:30-31; Mark 3:28-30). The overarching point is this: There is no other acceptable sacrifice for sin than the death of Christ on the cross. If someone deliberately, intentionally, purposely rejects the sacrifice of Christ after clearly understanding the gospel teaching about it, then there is no other hope of salvation for that person, for God has not provided any other name in Heaven by whom we could be saved (Acts 4:12; John 14:6).

(26-27): **Danger of a willful rejection of Jesus' perfect sacrifice for us:** To sin willfully is defined in **Hebrews 10:29**. It speaks of someone who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified as a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace. It is a knowing, deliberate rejection of Jesus' great work for us on the cross.

In a sense, every sin is a "willful sin." But here, the writer to the Hebrews speaks of something much more severe and relevant to these discouraged Jewish Christians who contemplated a retreat from a distinctive Christianity and a return to Judaism with its obsolete sacrificial system. This is turning your back on Jesus.

If Jesus' sacrifice for sin is rejected, there remains **no other** sacrifice that can cleanse.

When we sin willfully by rejecting Jesus' work on the cross as sufficient, we have: (1) Trampled the Son of God underfoot (i.e., disgraced Him by rejecting His greatest work and devalued Him by devaluing what He did); (2) Counted the blood of the covenant a common thing (i.e., considered that Jesus' blood was of no greater importance than the countless animals that had been sacrificed under the Old Covenant); and, (3) Insulted the Spirit of grace (i.e., offended the Holy Spirit, whose purpose it is to present Jesus and His work to us (John 16:8-15) when we reject Jesus and His finished work on our behalf). When we reject God's free gift of grace, we default to seeking justification by the Law (Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:1).

(28-29): **Contrast of penalties for disregarding Mosaic Law versus disregarding Christ's sacrifice:** The penalty for disregarding Mosaic Law (i.e., lesser offense) was physical death and it required the testimony of 2-3 witnesses (**Deuteronomy 17:6**). The penalty for trampling on the Son of God is much greater as it is the eternal separation from God (i.e., the second death in **Revelation 20**). To despise Christ's death on the cross as not having saving value is an enormous sin against God (i.e., greater offense). Jesus referred to His blood as the blood of the covenant at the Last Supper (**Matthew 26:28**). The phrase, insulted the Spirit of grace is comparable to what Jesus said about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 12:31-32**).

In these past two verses, we see that the writer turned back to the conditions under the Law of Moses in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 17:2-7). Under the Old Covenant there was little mercy for those found guilty (e.g., in Leviticus 20:10 the penalty for adultery was death; in Numbers 15 if one was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath, he was put to death). The severity of the punishment was meant to communicate God's absolute holiness and intolerance for sin. Thus, the writer posed the question in Hebrews 10:29, "If God dealt with sin under the Old Covenant like this, how much more serious is the sin of rejecting God's only Son and His only way to Him?" To disregard Moses was serious enough but to deny the Son of God is eternally and infinitely worse. To despise Moses, called for death but to despise the Son of God called for damnation.

Such a person would be one that “hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant,” and “despise (“insulted”) unto the Spirit of grace.” Deliberate and willful sin is essentially stomping on the Son of God. It is an action of scorn and means to count something as worthless. Additionally, willful and deliberate sin treats the blood of Jesus as an unholy or common thing. In other words, the willful sinner is saying, “I don’t care about the blood of Jesus, and I don’t care that You have shed your blood for me!” Lastly, the willful sinner insults the Holy Spirit of God. To treat the Holy Spirit in such a shameful way involves sinning against the Father and the Son also, because the three are one.

I believe that the person to which the writer is referring to here is one who professed faith in Christ, came into association and involvement with other believers, and professed to be real but was not. He was one fraction of a step toward salvation, but instead of moving forward toward Christ, he willfully moved away, thus rejecting God’s only way of salvation. He was a professing-but-not-possessing “Christian”.

(30-31): God takes holiness seriously: The writer referred to Moses’ teaching in **Deuteronomy 32:35-36** to emphasize the seriousness with which God will deal with all who has offended His Holiness. People will ultimately reap what they will sow (**Galatians 6:7-10**).

This judgment is for those who have rejected God’s mercy. For those who accept Christ’s love and accept His salvation, the coming judgment (Hebrews 9:27) is no cause for worry, for being saved through His grace, they have nothing to fear (see I John 4:18).

CONFIDENCE FROM PAST (HEBREWS 10:32-39)

More than once, the writer balanced a severe warning with an encouraging word (e.g., the warning in Hebrews 6:4-6 is balanced by the assurance of Hebrews 6:9-12). The admonition of Hebrews 10:26-31 is balanced by the encouraging reminder of Hebrews 10:32-39 about everything the Jewish Christians had experienced in their walk with Christ this far. They had witnessed the reality of their faith by maintaining confidence and persevering in the presence of many difficulties.

(32-34): Remember how you previously have stood for God in tough times: These discouraged Jewish Christians had suffered for Jesus, were rejected from their community, and likely counted as dead. They were taunted by crowds, their property was seized, and some were at risk to be martyred. This came after they trusted in Jesus. They made it through the time of persecution and discouragement by keeping a perspective on eternity. In order to persevere to this extent you must have a true relationship with Jesus (**Luke 9:62**).

Hebrews encourages believers, though in the midst of persecution and pressures, to persevere in their Christian lives. Although we don’t usually associate suffering with a good experience, it can be a positive experience. During times of great stress, we feel God’s wonderful presence clearly, grow in our faith and deepen our relationship with Him (**Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4**).

(35-36): Draw on your past experience to gain enduring strength: These discouraged Jewish Christians were in danger of casting away their confidence in Jesus, and relapsing into a dead Old Covenant relationship with God. The writer reminded them not to throw away their confidence, but to remain as bold as they were when they approached God’s Throne of Grace. It is the same boldness that Peter and John exhibited in the face of hostility (**Acts 4:13**).

We have need of endurance to receive the promise of God after we have done the will of God. The toughest and most discouraging trials are when we are called to obey God's will when the fulfillment of His promise seems so far away. This is why we need endurance and perseverance. Faithfulness during the time when the promise seems unfulfilled is the measure of your obedience and spiritual maturity. This endurance is built through trials and the testing of our faith (James 1:2-4).

(37-39): **The just shall live by faith:** We need to follow in the footsteps of the just who will live by faith, and endure to see the promise fulfilled. Note that every word in **Habakkuk 2:4** is important, and the Lord quotes it three times in the New Testament just to bring out the fullness of the meaning!

1. In **Romans 1:17**, when Paul quotes this same passage from **Habakkuk 2:4**, the emphasis is on **faith**: "The just shall live by faith."
2. In **Galatians 3:11**, when Paul quotes this passage from **Habakkuk 2:4**, the emphasis is on **just**: "The just shall live by faith."
3. In **Hebrews 10:38**, when the writer to the Hebrews quotes this same passage from **Habakkuk 2:4**, the emphasis is on **live**: "The just shall live by faith."

All of the 613 precepts of Jewish law in Exodus through Deuteronomy pointed to living justly by faith. These **613** precepts (365 negative precepts and 248 positive precepts) were communicated by God to Moses.

David, in Psalm 15, reduced them to **11** principles: [i] walk uprightly, [ii] work righteousness, [iii] speak truth in your heart; [iv] have no slander upon your tongue, [v] not doing evil to his fellow, [vi] not taking up a reproach against your neighbor, [vii] in whose eyes a vile person is despised [viii] honoring them that fear the Lord, [ix] swearing to his own hurt and changing not, [x] Putting not out his money on interest, [xi] not taking a bribe against the innocent.

Isaiah, in Isaiah 33:15-16, reduced them to **6** principles: [i] Walking righteously, [ii] speaking uprightly, [iii] Despising the gain of oppressions, [iv] Shaking his hand from holding of bribes, [v] Stopping his ear from hearing of blood, [vi] Shutting his eyes from looking upon evil.

Micah, in Micah 6:8, reduced them to **3** principles: [i] to do justly, [ii] to love mercy, and [iii] to walk humbly before thy God.

Isaiah, in Isaiah 56:1, reduced them to **2** principles: [i] Keep ye justice, [ii] do righteousness.

Habakkuk, in Habakkuk 2:4, reduced them to **1** overarching principle: **The just shall live by faith.**

But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul: This is a confident conclusion. We will be those who endure on and gain the promise of God; not draw back into old traditions or into an Old Covenant relationship with God, or any other replacement for Jesus.

Hebrews 11: Examples of Faith to Help the Discouraged

Just as our physical eyesight is the sense that gives us evidence of the material world, faith is the "sense" that gives us evidence of the invisible, spiritual world. Faith has its reasons that can't be measured in a lab they have to be understood spiritually. Faith is not a bare belief or intellectual understanding; it is a willingness to trust in, to rely on, and to cling to.

"Faith extends beyond what we learn from our senses, and the author is saying that it has its reasons. Its tests are not those of the senses, which yield uncertainty." (Morris)

"Physical eyesight produces a conviction or evidence of visible things; faith is the organ which enables people to see the invisible order." (Bruce)

(1) Definition of faith: Faith does not contradict reason, although it may go beyond reason. I may objectively prove that the Bible is the most unique book ever published, and has impacted society more than any other book, but only faith can prove that the Bible is the Word of God. Therefore, this is a belief beyond reason, **but not in contradiction to reason.**

(2) Faith enabled people in the past to overcome: The great examples of godliness in Scripture all had different circumstances and personalities, but they all had one thing in common, which is faith. The discouraged Jewish Christians needed a good testimony, and so the author of **Hebrews** provided these examples of faith in **Hebrews 11** to break them out of discouragement.

(3) Faith gives understanding to the invisible world: No one, including each one, of us was around to see God's act of creation in **Genesis 1**, as we only know of it by faith. However, we also know this by reason because we know the world was created by an Intelligent Designer (see www.reasons.org). Again, this is faith going beyond reason, but not in contradiction to reason.

Even in times when it seems when God expects a faith that contradicts reason, closer examination reveals He does not. For example, it might seem contrary to reason for God to expect Abraham to believe that Sarah's dead womb could bring forth a child. But it is not unreasonable to believe that the God, who created life and the womb, could do this, and would do it according to His promise and His good pleasure (**Romans 9:22**).

So that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible: God stated that He created all matter in the Universe (**Genesis 1:1**). When **Hebrews** was written many believed the Universe was created out of existing matter, not out of nothing, or things which are visible. However, this Scripture corrects this misunderstanding. In addition to all matter, God also created time, which means that God is transcendent to time (**Hebrews 13:8**).

The Hebrews 11 Hall of Faith

Hebrews 11:4-38 present many people in the past that Scripture identifies as men and women who display their faith, although imperfectly, and who were all saved by it. They provide us a historical record of what challenges they faced and how their faith helped them overcome them.

(4) Abel's faith: The difference between the sacrifice of Cain and that of Abel (**Genesis 4:3-5**) was not because one was animal and the other was vegetable. The fundamental difference was that Abel's sacrifice was made by faith.

"Abel's sacrifice was preferred to his brother's for no other reason than that it was sanctified by faith; for surely the fat of brute animals did not smell so sweetly, that it could, by its odour, pacify God." (Calvin)

How did God testify of Abel's gifts? It is likely that God showed His pleasure with Abel's sacrifice by consuming it with fire from heaven, as happened at the dedication of tabernacle (**Leviticus 9:24**), the dedication of the temple, built under Solomon (**II Chronicles 7:1**) and upon offerings made by King David (**I Chronicles 21:26**) and the prophet Elijah (**I Kings 18:38**).

Through it he being dead still speaks: With Abel's example, we see that faith is not necessarily rewarded on earth, where life is a vapor (**James 4**). God Himself testifies to the righteousness of the faithful, as Abel's blood still speaks to us, reminding us of the value of eternity.

(5) Enoch's faith: Enoch is only mentioned in **Genesis 5:21-24** as the man who walked with God and who did not see death, as God took him. Jude recognizes him as a prophet (**Jude 1:14-15**).

The writer to the Hebrews assumes that only a man of faith could enjoy close communion with God. Obviously, anyone who had this kind of fellowship with God must have pleased God, and in pleasing God, Enoch fulfilled the purpose for which man was created (**Revelation 4:11**).

(6) Pleasing God without faith is impossible: This is the basic faith required of any who will seek God. One must believe that He is, and one must believe He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Accordingly, we must believe that God is there and that He will reveal Himself to the seeking heart. It is not difficult to please God without faith; **it is impossible!**

"These two elements seem most simple, but, alas, how many professing Christians act as if God were not living; and how many others, though seeking after Him, are not expecting from Him as Rewarder!" (Newell)

(7) Noah's faith: Noah was warned of a flood, something that hadn't happened before. His faith was shown in not merely agreeing the flood would come even though it had never rained, but in doing what God told him to do regarding it; he was moved with godly fear.

He condemned the world: God enabled Noah to preach sermons of condemnation to the totally depraved world. However, the mere godly conduct of the faithful, without any preaching at all, can feel like condemnation to the world.

(8) Abraham's obedience by faith: Abraham showed his faith by going to a new place God had promised him; but his faith, like ours, was imperfect. Comparing **Genesis 12:1-5** with **Acts 7:2-4**, it is evident that Abraham first went half way to the place God called him to go, and only eventually completely obeyed. However, thousands of years later, God does not "remember" the delayed obedience, only the faith that was displayed (**Genesis 15:6**).

(9-10) Abraham's sojourning life of faith: Abraham lived as a sojourner in the land God had promised, never owning any of it except the plots he and Sarah were buried on. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in tents instead of houses as they had no permanent home. They looked forward to a better city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Paul tells us that when we are in Christ, we are no longer citizens of Earth, but citizens of Heaven. Christians shouldn't get "green cards" for planet Earth.

(11-12) Sarah's faith and its results: Sarah's faith was also imperfect. She first laughed in unbelief (**Genesis 18:9-15**) and then she learned to laugh in faith (**Genesis 21:6**). She named her son Isaac, which is Hebrew for "laughter". Because of the faith of Sarah and Abraham, millions of descendants were born fulfilling the **Genesis 12:3** promise.

Faith boils down to judging that God is faithful to and able to keep His promises. It was this faith that enabled Sarah to receive strength to conceive seed at Age 90. God gave the strength, but Sarah had to receive it by faith and appropriate that faith.

(13-16) Abraham and Sarah's faith is instructive: The promise of Jesus the Messiah was made to Abraham and Sarah, and they believed the promise. Yet they died having never received it, only seeing it in faith.

- They saw the promises afar off, willing to look at and consider the promise of God, even though it seemed so far away;
- They carefully considered the promise, and assured themselves that the promise had to be valid because it was God making the promise;
- They took the promise and embraced it in faith; and,
- They took the promise with the understanding that this world was not their home; that God had a better and more enduring home for them in heaven.

Walking in faith is easier when we remember that this world is not our home. It is easier when we remember that on this side of eternity, not everything is settled and every wrong is not righted (Romans 8:28-29).

Faith is very difficult when we live as "practical atheists." This describes someone who may have a theoretical belief in God, but the belief doesn't matter in what they do from day to day. When we remember there is a spiritual reality (i.e., a heavenly home that is our real home), faith is much easier.

Naturalism is the Satanic-induced belief that only what can be found and measured in nature is real. Scientists and educators who believe in this false premise may let us believe in God, as long as we agree that God is not real. But, when we believe in the reality of God and of heaven and of His Word, it is completely unacceptable to them. But for those who do believe in a real living God, the reality of heaven, and eternal life, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

(17-19) Abraham's faith was great enough to know God was able to raise the dead:

Abraham's faith was severely tested by God when he was told to offer up his only begotten son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. Abraham was confronted with a promise and a command from God which seemed in contradiction. However, he obeyed the command, letting God take care of the promise.

The verb tense for "offered up" indicates that as far as Abraham was concerned, the sacrifice was complete. In his will and in his purpose, he really did sacrifice his son. As far as Abraham was concerned, Isaac was as good as dead, and it was from the dead that he received him back, in a manner that prefigured the resurrection of Jesus.

Offered up his only begotten son: Abraham's other son, Ishmael, was a result of his flesh-driven attempt to fulfill God's **Genesis 3:15** promise. This person was not recognized by God (**Genesis 22:1-14**); thus, Isaac is Abraham's only begotten son where the Messianic seed would be carried forward.

(20) Isaac's faith: Isaac was really living in the flesh, not in faith, when he first intended to bless Jacob and Esau. He wanted to bless Esau with the birthright for carnal reasons (i.e., liked him as a more "manly" man, liked wild game he brought home) instead of blessing Jacob, **whom God had chosen.**

Isaac came to the place of faith when he discovered that he had actually blessed Jacob instead of Esau, **Genesis 27:33** says Isaac trembled exceedingly. Isaac was troubled because he knew that he had tried to defeat God's plan and that God had prevailed. He realized that he would always be defeated when he tried to resist God's will, and he came to learn that despite his arrogance against God's will, God's will was glorious.

(21) Jacob's faith: Jacob led a pretty carnal life. His Hebrew name is translated, “trickster”. Yet, his faith could also look beyond death, and in **Genesis 49-50**, he blessed each of his sons.

(22) Joseph's faith: Joseph made mention of the departure of the children of Israel in **Genesis 50:24**, when he said, “God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob”. He knew in his heart that God's promise was true.

When Joseph died, he was never buried. His coffin laid above ground for 400+ years until it was taken back to Canaan; a silent witness all those years that Israel was going back to the Promised Land, just as God had promised.

(23) Moses' parents faith: Moses' parents showed faith when they “perceived” that he was specially favored by God and took measures of faith to save his life despite the clear and present danger.

(24-26) Moses' faith in Pharaoh's court: Moses showed faith when he let God chart his destiny instead of Pharaoh. He knew that to go God's way had consequences where he would suffer affliction rather than enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.

The reproach of Christ: Moses probably didn't know it, at the time but the persecution he suffered for his choice of servanthood to God and His people put him in the company of Jesus who suffered to set men free (Philippians 1:29).

(27) Moses' faith when he left Egypt: Moses' natural eyes could see the danger from Pharaoh, and he understood the danger in remaining anywhere near Egypt. Yet his eye of faith could see Him who is invisible, and he understood that God was a greater fact in his situation.

(28) Moses showed faith when he led Israel in the Passover, in obedience to God's command: It took faith to believe that the blood of a lamb on the door posts and lintel would save a household from the terror of the Angel of Death. Yet, Moses had that faith, and led the nation in observance of the first Passover.

(29) The nation of Israel's faith when crossing the Red Sea: The difference between the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and the Egyptians who followed them was not courage, but faith. The Egyptians had as much courage then the Israelites, but not the same faith, and they each had different fates. The Israelites passed through, and the Egyptians were drowned.

(30) The nation of Israel's faith when circling around Jericho: At Jericho, the people of Israel had a daring faith. There was no turning back, having already crossed the Jordan River at flood stage, which cut off any line of retreat.

- At Jericho, the people of Israel had an obedient faith. They did not really understand what God was doing, yet they obeyed none the less;
- At Jericho, the people of Israel had a patient faith. The walls did not fall down for the first six days, yet they kept marching as God commanded; and,
- At Jericho, the people of Israel had an anticipating faith. They knew God would act on the seventh day when they shouted.

(31) Rahab's faith: Rahab might seem to be an unusual example of faith, but her trust in God and willingness to identify with His people, no matter what the cost, is worthy of praise. When the Hebrew spies came to her, she declared He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath (**Joshua 2:11**). This was proof of her faith; albeit not strong. Her faith was still commendable.

Clement of Rome, the earliest Christian writer outside of the Bible, was the first to see a symbol of the blood of Jesus in the scarlet (Isaiah 1:18) cord which Rahab hung outside her window.

(32) Other faith heroes: Each of these heroes were men of faith, yet had notable areas of failure in their life. Still, **Hebrews 11** commends their faith which shows that **weak faith is better than unbelief**. You don't have to be perfect to make it into God's "Hall of Faith."

- Gideon was a man who boldly destroyed idols and was mightily used of God to defeat a much larger army of Midianites (**Judges 6-7**). Yet he was also a man who doubted God's word to him at first, and repeatedly asked for confirmation;
- Barak was a man who led the people of Israel in a dramatic victory over the Canaanites (**Judges 4**), yet he hesitated and went forward only when Deborah encouraged him;
- Samson was mightily used of the Lord to defeat Philistia, yet he failed to live up to his potential, having a tragic ending to his life after Delilah's enticement (**Judges 13-16**).
- Jephthah was used of God to defeat Ammon, yet he made a foolish vow and stubbornly kept it, and his daughter lost her life (**Judges 11**).
- David was a remarkable man of faith as we see in **I Samuel, II Samuel** and **Psalms**, yet he also failed with his adultery with Bathsheba and subsequent cover-up that led to Uriah the Hittite's death and he failed with his own children (e.g., Amnon, Absalom).

(33-35a) Faith victories over circumstances: Each man and woman of faith was victorious over extremely challenging circumstances:

- **Some of those who subdued kingdoms:** King David, Joshua, King Asa, King Jehoshaphat, King Hezekiah, King Josiah.
- **Some of those who worked righteousness:** Elijah, Elisha, all the prophets of God, and King Josiah.
- **Some of those who obtained promises:** Caleb, Gideon, Barak.
- **Some of those who stopped the mouths of lions:** Daniel, David, and Benaiah (i.e., one of David's mighty men).
- **Some of those who quenched the violence of fire:** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.
- **Some of those who escaped the edge of the sword:** David escaped both the swords of Goliath and Saul, Moses escaped the sword of Pharaoh, and Elijah escaped the sword of Jezebel.
- **Some of those who out of weakness were made strong:** Sarah, Gideon, Abraham, Esther, and King Hezekiah.

- **Some of those who became valiant in battle:** King David, King Asa, and King Jehoshaphat.
- **Some of those women who received their dead raised to life again:** The widow of Zarepheth, and the Shunamite woman.

(35b-38) Faith victories under their circumstances: Many men and women of faith suffered greatly and were even killed. As Jesus said in **John 5:29**, there is a resurrection unto life, and a resurrection unto condemnation. These worthies received the better resurrection.

- **Trial of mockings:** Isaac endured the cruel mocking of Ishmael, and Samson was mocked at the feast of the Philistines.
- **Chains and imprisonments:** Joseph was cast into prison for his faith, and the evil King Ahab imprisoned the prophet Micaiah.
- **They were stoned:** Zechariah was stoned to death between the altar and the temple, and Naboth was stoned to death by Jezebel's henchmen.
- **Sawn in two:** According to reliable tradition, Isaiah was sawn in two and killed.
- **Were tempted:** How does being tempted compare with these other persecutions? Some have thought the text was corrupted here, and the writer to the Hebrews originally wrote "branded" or "burnt alive" or "mutilated" or "strangled." But for those who have known the pains of temptation, it is not unreasonable to think that the writer to the Hebrews regards overcoming temptation as a true triumph of faith.
- **Were slain with the sword:** Such as the 85 priests murdered by Doeg, or the prophets murdered in Elijah's day.
- **Wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins:** Such as Elijah, who wore this kind humble clothing and did not mind the humility or the discomfort.
- **Of whom the world was not worthy:** The world is not necessarily friendly to people of faith, and the world isn't necessarily worthy of them either.
- **In dens and caves of the earth:** King David, Elijah, and prophets under the leadership of Obadiah were all forced to flee and hide in caves.

"The despised and ill-treated group of servants of God was of greater real worth than all the rest of humanity put together." (Morris)

(39-40) Conclusion: We have even more reasons for faith, more reasons to hold on to faith, than these heroes of the faith did: Even though they obtained a good testimony through faith, they never saw the promise in the same way that we do **on this side of the cross**. They did not receive the promise, the testimony of the completed work of the Messiah on their behalf. We have been provided something better, seeing and enjoying the completed work of Jesus on our behalf, and have much more reason to hold on to faith.

They could not be made complete until the work of Jesus; they looked forward to Jesus and His work, we look at it from behind - and enjoy the fruits of His work!