



Talmid תלמיד a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 5

MAY 1, 2015

STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



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Praying for the Lost

Charles Spurgeon related well the priority all Christians must give to praying for the lost:

The soul-winner must be a master of the art of prayer. You cannot bring souls to God if you go not to God yourself. You must get your battle-ax, and your weapons of war, from the armoury of sacred communication with Christ. If you are much alone with Jesus, you will catch His Spirit; you will be fired with the flame that burned in His breast, and consumed His life. You will weep with the tears that fell upon Jerusalem when He saw it perishing; and if you cannot speak so eloquently as He did, yet shall

there be about what you say somewhat of the same power which in Him thrilled the hearts and awoke the consciences of men. My dear hearers, especially you members of the church, I am always so anxious lest any of you should begin to lie upon your oars, and take things easy in the matters of God’s kingdom. There are some of you—I bless you, and I bless God at the remembrance of you—who are in season, and out of season, in earnest for winning souls, and you are the truly wise; but I fear there are others whose hands are slack, who are satisfied to let me preach, but do not themselves preach; who take these seats, and occupy these pews, and hope the cause goes well, but that is all they do (*The Soul Winner* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989 reprint], 246–47. *Italics in original*).

What Christian does not pray for the salvation of friends and loved ones who do not know the Lord? Yet we must have a broader outlook than that. Scripture supports the perspective that we should all pray for the lost in general.

The Bible gives several examples of prayer for those outside salvation. In [Numbers 14:19](#) Moses prayed, “**Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy loving-kindness, just as Thou also hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.**” He cried out to God for the forgiveness of the sinning Israelites.

Samuel the prophet also prayed for Israel's salvation. In [1 Samuel 7:3-5](#) we read,

Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the Lord with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the Lord alone. Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you."

Later in [1 Samuel](#), after rebuking them for their sin in demanding a king, he said, **"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way" ([1 Samuel 12:23](#)).**

The New Testament relates the testimony of Stephen. While being stoned to death, he prayed what amounted to a prayer for his executioners' salvation: **"And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them!' And having said this, he fell asleep" ([Acts 7:59-60](#)).**

Paul had a deep desire for the salvation of his fellow Israelites. He expressed that desire in [Romans 9:1-4](#): **"I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites." That deep concern could not help but find expression in his prayer life: "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation" ([Romans 10:1](#)).**

The Bible, then, clearly expresses the appropriateness and propriety of praying for the lost. In addition to the examples noted above, evangelistic praying is the express teaching of [1 Timothy 2:1-8](#). These verses are polemical in nature; they confront a problem in the Ephesian church. Since Paul here

commands prayer for the lost, we may conclude that such praying had slipped from the priority it should have been at Ephesus.

Since the scope of the Gospel call is universal, Paul shows the need to pray for all men. The goal of the church, like Israel before it, is to reach the world with the saving truth of God. Israel failed to be the faithful nation by which God could reach the world, and the responsibility has been passed to the church. Paul writes out of concern that the exclusivity that caused Israel to fail in her mission should not cripple the church. History shows that the church has, in fact, become content with itself and often neglectful of sinners.

The central function of the church on earth is to reach the lost. Paul knew that the Ephesians would never do that as long as they maintained their selfish exclusivism. To carry out their mission in the world they must be made to understand the breadth of the Gospel call. And the first feature in understanding that is to come to grips with evangelistic praying.

THE NATURE OF EVANGELISTIC PRAYER

Paul writes, **"First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men," [1 Timothy 2:1 \(NASB\)](#)**

While the first three terms Paul uses are virtually synonymous, there are among them some subtle shades of meaning that enrich our concept of prayer. **"Entreaties"** refers to prayer that arises from a sense of need. Knowing what is lacking, we plead with God to supply it. As we look out on the masses of lost humanity, the enormity of the need should drive us to our knees in evangelistic prayer.

The seventeenth-century English Puritan Richard Baxter wrote,

"Oh, if you have the hearts of Christians or of men in you, let them yearn towards your poor ignorant, ungodly neighbours. Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell; many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them, and if they die unregenerate, they are lost forever. Have you hearts of rock, that cannot pity men in such a case as

this? If you believe not the Word of God, and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourself to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned, so you be saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves, for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace ... Dost thou live close by them, or meet them in the streets, or labour with them, or travel with them, or sit and talk with them, and say nothing to them of their souls, or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldst run and help them; and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell?" (cited in I.D.E. Thomas, ed., *A Puritan Golden Treasury* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], 92–93)

“Prayers” refers simply to prayer in general, unlike “**entreaties**” which in Scripture is used only in reference to God. It thus carries with it a unique element of worship and reverence. Prayer for the lost is ultimately directed at God as an act of worship, because the salvation of sinners causes them to give glory to Him.

The Greek word [ἐντευξις] “enteuxis” translated “**petitions**” comes from a root word meaning “**to fall in with someone.**” The verb form is used to speak of both Christ’s and the Spirit’s intercession for us (**Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:26**).

Hebrews 7:25 (NASB)

25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Romans 8:26 (NASB)

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;

They identify with our needs and become involved in our struggles, revealing empathy, sympathy, and compassion. Praying for the lost should never be cold, detached, or impersonal, like a public defender assigned to represent a defendant. Understanding the depths of their misery and pain, and their coming doom, **we must cry to God for the salvation of sinners.**

“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,” 1 Timothy 2:1 (NASB)

“**Thanksgivings**” is the fourth element in evangelistic prayers. We pray with a spirit of gratitude to God that the Gospel offer has been extended, that we have the privilege of reaching the lost with that Gospel, and that some respond with faith and repentance.

These four nuances enrich our prayers as we pray effectively for the lost. If they are missing, we need to examine our hearts.

- 1) Do we fully realize the desperate condition the lost are in?
- 2) Do we really want to see God glorified by the salvation of souls?
- 3) Do we sympathize with the compelling reality of their lost souls, both for time and eternity?
- 4) Are we thankful the Gospel message is extended to all and for our privilege of sharing it?

If those components are lacking in our hearts **we will be indifferent**. Often we are indifferent simply because we are not obedient to those urgings.

CORAM DEO **(Before the face of God)**

PREPARING TO HEAR FROM GOD

This teaching is for Bible study. As you engage in this study, refer to your Bible again and again—to mark specific words, underline phrases, or write in the margins. I believe God dearly loves to see Bibles that are marked with oil from our fingers, stained with tears from our eyes, and noted with dates and insights.

The Bible is God’s foremost method of communication with us today. It is the wellspring from which new insights and eternal wisdom come to us. It is the reference to which we must return continually to check out messages that we believe are from God. I believe it is far more important for you to write what you learn from this study guide into the margins and end pages of your Bible than for you to write passages of the Bible into this handout.

Keys to Study

You will be asked at various points to identify with the material presented by answering one or more of these questions:

- What new insight have you gained?
- Have you ever had a similar experience?
- How do you feel about this?
- In what way are you challenged to act?

Insights

An insight is more than a fact or an idea. It is seeing something as if it is new to you. You may have read a particular verse many times. You may have studied it, analyzed it, and meditated on it until you think there is nothing else you can know about it. And then, God has a surprise for you! Suddenly, He reveals new meaning to you. That is a spiritual insight.

Insights are usually very personal—something in a verse or passage stands out to you because it relates to you in some way or applies to what you are experiencing right now in your life. Ask God to give you insights every time you open His Word to read it. I believe He'll answer that prayer.

I find that noting the insights is important in Bible study. When we are focused on identifying the insights God gives us, we tend to look and listen for them more diligently. And the more we look and listen for insights, the more God gives them to us.

The fact is, if you haven't gained new spiritual insights after reading several passages from God's Word, you haven't truly been engaged in the process of studying. From time to time in this study, you'll be asked to note what specific passages of the Bible say to you.



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Hebrews 11 – Overview Part 3

In our continuation of the [Hebrews 11](#) overview, we are going to look at four major truths regarding biblical faith. Each one of these elements provide insight into the nature and characteristics of sanctifying faith within the believer's life. It is important to understand the difference between "saving" faith and "sanctifying" faith. Saving faith refers to that work of God in the initial act of entrusting one's life to Christ that brings them into a spiritual relationship with the Trinitarian God. Sanctifying faith is that work of God that enables the believer to grow in their relationship with God. For the most part, it is the primary focus of the Christian life – growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. However, in Hebrews when the term "faith" is used it carries with it the predominant theme of "perseverance" – and that is a very important element to understand.

The Greek term for "faith" (*pistis*) is translated by three English terms: "faith", "belief", and "trust", and all of those various translations provide some insight into what true biblical faith is. Biblical faith involves believing and trusting God. It believes His Word, it believes His promises, and it believes in the trustworthi-

ness of the One making the promises even when the circumstances may not always be what the believer would hope.

The first truth is found in [Hebrews 11:1](#) where it states that faith is both “**substance**” and “**evidence**”.

The second truth is found in [Hebrews 11:3](#) where it states that “**by faith**” that the believer “**understands**” some foundational truths for their life. What the believer cannot see is much more important than what he can see. What is invisible to us is actually the supreme reality. Everything that we can see will one day be re-made into a new heavens and a new earth. [2 Peter 3:10](#) says,

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

The third truth is found in [Hebrews 11:4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31](#) where it states that what the Old Testament believers accomplished was “**by faith**”. In [Hebrews 11:33 and 39](#) it uses the term “**through faith**”.

The fourth truth is found in [Hebrews 11:6](#) where it states that “**without faith**” that it is “**impossible to please God**”.

Truth 1 – Hebrews 11:1:

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

True biblical faith operates quite simply. God speaks, we hear His Word, we trust His Word, and we act on His Word no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be. The circumstances may seem impossible, and at times the consequences may certainly be frightening and unknown; but the believer obeys God’s Word just the same and believes that God will do what is right and what is best. In essence, it is a firm belief in the sovereignty of God over all things that may occur in the believer’s life. This is not acting foolishly – never. There is not one single instance in the Bible where God asked believers to do something that was utterly foolish. There were many times where He

asked them to do things that they did not fully understand at the moment – such as walking around the walls of Jericho seven times and blowing the trumpets. At first that certainly did not seem that it would be very effective and most likely did not seem to make sense to those participating, but surely it turned out better than most probably expected.

If we take a look at the whole book of Hebrews, one of the truths that has been learned is that there is much to gain or to lose in the Christian life. Rewards or the lack thereof are very real and will have an eternal impact on our lives that we simply cannot measure or quantify in this life. We simply know that there is much to gain or to lose. This truth is clearly seen in the various warnings that flow through the entire letter. Once again, it is all about “**perseverance**” and “**endurance**” in the Christian life. [Hebrews 12:1](#) summarizes the truth this way when it says,

¹Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

We know that God’s promises have a twofold function. The first function is to give the believer hope and the second function is to prove the faithfulness and trustworthiness of God and His Word. He has always been faithful to His people and always will be. However, the warnings of Hebrews is one of God’s ways of eliciting a belief in God that perseveres. Whenever a parent disciplines their children, the purpose of that discipline is to elicit a faithfulness in the child to the parent’s words and commands. In the same way, God gives us warnings so that we realize that there is much to gain or to lose. If you do not obey the 25mph speed limit on the sharp curve on the Blue Ridge Parkway, you may find yourself going over the mountain. There is much to lose in disobedience.

What God is saying through Hebrews is that as believers we must develop an attitude of perseverance in the faith. The “**race that is set before us**” is long and often very difficult, and to make it to the end in an enduring way takes a certain kind of spiritual focus and an enduring and persevering faith that many Christians simply do not have. If I can say it this way, those who have fallen out of the race may in reality have just been spir-

itual impostors. **There is an unbreakable bond between being in Christ and remaining in Christ.** Every committed believer must fully understand that a person's "initial" reception of the gospel is not a sure and certain indicator that theirs is a faith that will endure and prove to be genuine. It is not someone's initial reception of the Word, but the enduring of faith that signals true salvation. This is clearly seen in Jesus' teaching in the Parable of the Soils where there were some "**who believed for a while**". [Luke 8:11-15](#) is Jesus' explanation of the parable and He says,'

¹¹Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. ¹³But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

The problem for the church is really a very simple one. The church has always been an assembly of people gathered around a common confession of faith in Jesus Christ. However, the public confession and declaration of that faith itself is only external. So, from the beginning there have been many who were allowed to join a particular fellowship, but in reality they had never truly embraced Christ. It is the idea of the wheat and the tares. There are many who outwardly receive the gospel, but who inwardly have never embraced Christ. The danger of that is life-threatening.

There is one very important truth that cannot be overlooked at this point in the discussion of persevering and enduring faith. That truth is that **true faith is not a human contribution to salvation.** Genuine biblical faith is a gift and it is not the believer grasping on to God, but their being grasped by God. However, once this biblical faith is given

by grace to the believer, the goal from that point is go the distance. In reformed theology it is called the "perseverance of the saints" or the term I like better is the "preservation of the saints". There are many who drop out of the race, and by so doing in all likelihood they are proving that they never truly had saving faith. **Persevering in Christ is the true biblical mark of authentic salvation.** The idea of persevering in the faith is not optional for the believer, but rather is an essential element of the Christian life. We cannot have a meaningful conversation about genuine biblical faith without talking about running the race with endurance, but there is one simple truth that must be fully understood. **If a believer is going to go the distance, then they have to do it by God's power and not their own.** In the same way that we cannot save ourselves or keep ourselves saved, we cannot and will not make it to the end of the race in our own power. We need the grace of God and the power of God operating in our life to finish the spiritual marathon that we are in.

From [Hebrews 11:1](#) we learn that **faith is being sure of what we hope for and being certain of what we cannot see.** Faith is not something that someone can actually see, but it is a very tangible and necessary spiritual element in the believer's life. The writer calls it "substance" and "evidence". Faith is not wishful thinking or even positive thinking. For many people, they view faith as "positive spiritual thinking" and as always expressing positive words and thoughts about God and what He is going to do for them. Certainly there is nothing wrong with being positive in the Christian life, but that is **not** what defines sanctifying faith. In reality, that is very far from a biblical definition of faith and may actually be considered presumption in many cases. I love the way that the ESV Online Study Bible expresses this. It says,

"Biblical faith is a confident trust in the eternal God who is all-powerful, infinitely wise, eternally trustworthy—the God who has revealed himself in His Word and in the person of Jesus Christ, whose promises have proven true from generation to generation, and who will 'never leave nor forsake' his own (Hebrews 13:5)."

Faith is a settled confidence that something that is not yet seen, but has been promised by God will actually come to pass because God in His sovereignty will bring it to pass. The committed believer knows full well and with complete confidence that God cannot

lie, that His Word has never failed and will never fail, and so he rests his life on those Words and the promises from God. **Faith cannot actually take place until a person is able to believe in God's character.** Faith begins when we come to a settled conclusion that God is a good God and that He has no designs to do anything in our life that will hurt or harm us. That does not mean that stressful and difficult things will not happen to a believer, for they surely will. However, God's overall purpose for a believer's life is filled with God's grace and God's power to overcome whatever difficult circumstances that they may experience.

As stated earlier, faith is a settled confidence. It is an abiding confidence that God will do everything that He has promised He will do – even when the circumstances may appear to be different. However, it is very important to understand that **sanctifying faith and persevering faith are both volitional.** There is nothing “automatic” about believing. There is no “Easy Button” to push, no spiritual autopilot to set. I.e., we have to choose to believe God, we have to choose to trust God. What is it that we are choosing to believe? We are choosing to believe that God's Word is true and that it is impossible for God to NOT keep His promises to us. In fact, I would say that **true faith is demonstrated the most when we actually do NOT see any evidence of God's promises being fulfilled in our life.** Just think of Abraham for a moment. It was nearly 25 years after God gave him the promise that Isaac was born – 25 years! There were plenty of moments where I am sure that Abraham had the opportunity to doubt God's promise, but he refused to not believe in God's Word and His promise to him. The greatest test was when God commanded him to sacrifice his very son. Abraham's response was greater than amazing. How do you think that Moses felt when he came to the Red Sea or Daniel when they placed him in the lion's den? What about Stephen as he was being stoned? **Faith and assurance are always based on the character of God and the character of His Word – always.**

Hopefully, each of us as committed Christians believe with all of our being that heaven is a very real place and when we die that we will immediately be taken into the very presence of God. However, as certain as heaven is to us, every other promise that

God has given in His Word is just as sure and just as certain. It is not that one of God's promises is sure, but the rest are not that certain. Not at all. **Faith is a believer's response to God's faithfulness and to His Word.**

The Greek word for “**substance**” is “*hypostasis*”. It is a compound word that comes from “*hupo*” which means “under” and “*histemi*” which means “to set” or “to stand”. Literally, it could be transliterated as “to set under” as a support. In other places in the New Testament it is translated as “**assurance**” or “**confidence**”. The NASB, AMP, ESV, ASV, ISV, NRSV, and YLT actually translate it as “**confidence**”. I like the way that the NIV translates it when it says, “**Now faith is being sure of what we hope for....**”

From a practical perspective it simply represents that spiritual attribute that gives the believer the assurance and confidence that they need to stand under, to endure, or to undertake something in their life with confidence. In terms that we should identify with, it represents an actual spiritual “conviction” that a believer has. In the believer's heart and mind they actually believe something and have the assurance and conviction that what they believe is true. Faith in God and His Word is not some kind of mystical quality that the believer displays. Rather, it is truly something that they deeply believe in their heart and mind. It is believing and trusting in that which actually exists. The believer is convinced of this. Just because we may not be able to see something does not mean that it is not real and existing. We possess it by believing and having faith in that which is real and true. We can possess it now and actually are willing to entrust our lives to it.

Now, just to ensure that we do not make this too difficult to understand, it is important to appreciate that there are many things that we believe in that we cannot see and because we believe in them with great confidence and assurance, we actually entrust our lives to those things. For instance, we cannot see electricity, but we are fully assured that it exists, that it operates, and that when we turn on the switch that electricity will do its work. It certainly is not a blind faith, but a faith that is built on facts. Our entire life functions around something that we cannot see, but it does not deter us from committing our life to it. We cannot see gravity, but we would never jump off of something very high because we are fully convinced and persuaded that gravity exists

even though we cannot see it. Now, biblical faith operates just like these examples. It is not a “blind faith”. It does not deal with a vivid imagination or something that is superficial or deceptive. Rather, **biblical faith is based on God’s Word, historical facts, knowledge, experience, and personal possession.**

The second term used is the word “evidence”. Thayer says it means “*that by which invisible things are proved and we are convinced of their reality*”. It means proof, something that the believer is fully convinced of and something that he believes in even though he cannot see, taste, feel, or hear it. It is the idea of **having “conviction” about what we believe** simply because the reality of what we believe has been more than proven. It says “**the evidence of things not seen**”. The word “**things**” includes the reality of all of those promises that have not yet taken place in our life – the Second Coming, the Rapture, heaven, the eternal state, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Great White Throne Judgment, the Anti-Christ, the Tribulation, the Millennium, and the Lake of Fire. These “**things**” are absolutely certain and inescapable. I hope that you as a believer know with great and unswerving confidence that **the future is not uncertain at all because the future belongs to a sovereign God.**

At a personal level as a Christian, I do not believe in nothing. I do not believe in something that cannot be verified. I do not believe in that which cannot be proven or validated. The realities of God’s existence, of Christ, of salvation, and of the Bible are the most authenticated facts in history. If I can say it this way – God has validated Himself. The evidence for His existence and the reality of His historical and redemptive work in the world is beyond question. It is the “fool” that declares that there is no God.

Contextually, the emphasis in this passage since it follows **Hebrews 10** is for **the perseverance of the believers to the faith during a time of intense trials.** This is the opposite of someone just shrinking back and languishing because of a difficulty. Biblical faith is what actually causes a committed believer to stand. **True Biblical faith is demonstrated by a confident obedience to God’s Word in spite of difficult circumstances and unwanted**

consequences. Let me state this another way to make it more practical in our understanding of what it actually means. **A believer’s ability to stand in the face of immense pressure and trials can be sustained ONLY by what they know about the invisible world that is the object of their hope – not the visible world that they can actually see. Biblical faith does not rest in what is seen, but in what is unseen. Faith does NOT guarantee results! Faith simply rests in the sovereignty of God no matter the results.** **Hebrews 11:35-38** is a great example of this.

Please appreciate that the author is elaborating and expounding in Hebrews **11-12:3** on the qualities of steadfastness, faithfulness, endurance, and perseverance in the face of intense trials. In my mind, **Hebrews 11** is as much about endurance and perseverance as it is about faith. That is why the author has example after example of real people who suffered great trials, but they endured and persevered to the very end no matter the cost. If the congregation that the author was writing to was not going to draw back, but was going to sustain its Christian confession in a world very opposed to it, then there were some very real characteristics that needed to be theirs. The author previously stated it this way in **Hebrews 10:36 and 39** when he said,

³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

³⁹But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Just to reiterate that the vital message of this section is dealing with “**endurance**” as much as it is faith, the author says this in **Hebrews 12:1-4,**

¹Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴You

have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

Genuine biblical faith is able to move beyond disappointment and whatever sufferings the world may bring its way. You cannot win the race without endurance (v1).

The great men and women of Scripture who were truly used by God had to rest solely on the promises that God gave to them.

The fulfillment of those promises was very often far out into the distance. The very promise of heaven does not come until after the believer dies. Very often when God wants a believer to do something, there is not very much light, not very much information, and not very much specific direction. God calling Abraham out of the Ur of the Chaldees to go to a land where he had never been is a good example of this. For the Christian, however, they know that it is God's direction and that is all that matters and is exactly why each believer can put their faith and confidence in God and His Word. This is one of those simple principles that cannot be overlooked. What most people want is all of the information prior to exercising biblical faith in a specific direction. However, that really is not the biblical example at all. In fact, at a personal level I do not know of one instance where that has been the case. If a believer is willing to follow a God whose audible voice they have never heard and to believe in a Christ whom they have never seen and to trust their life to a book where everything in it was written 2000-4000 years ago, it is only so because their faith is a reality that is unshakeable.

The examples of faith that the author addresses in [Hebrews 11](#) are characterized by people who simply believed God in the face of great difficulty. They trusted God. They trusted His promises to them. It seems that if we are to truly glean the meaning found in this chapter, then the men and women who serve as examples and testimonies are actually secondary to the meaning of the passage.

The message of Hebrews 11 is not that people were faithful, but that God was faithful to them.

The idea of God's faithfulness seems fully delineated in [Hebrews 11:11](#),

¹¹By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

She knew God and she knew that He was faithful to what He had promised. In reality, that is how all of this actually works – God gives a Word and we are called on to trust that Word. Faith will always be tested – always. It is inevitable, unavoidable, and inescapable. These Old Testament believers committed themselves to a God who is steadfast, and in the process they themselves became steadfast. The more that believers commit themselves to God, the more they become conformed to Him. The more that they trusted Him, the more that they knew Him.

ENDNOTES

¹Ellingworth, 563.

²Schreiner, 40.

³Schreiner, 216.

⁴Schreiner, 217.

⁵Schreiner, 229.

⁶Schreiner, 245.

⁷Practical, 2049.

⁸Lane, 312.

⁹MacArthur, 287.

¹⁰MacArthur, 287.

¹¹Lane, 316.

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