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## *Into Thy Word Bible Study in Hebrews*

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### **Hebrews 11:17-31: *The Hall of Fame of Faith!***

**General idea:** It is by faith that Abraham was honored and used to build nations; he obeyed and trusted in God when told to leave his homeland and venture to an alien land that became an inheritance to his descendants. This showed confidence in God, His provision, and promise. This same faith also allowed Abraham and his wife Sarah, who were old and childless, to have children by which to build this nation to greater numbers than there were stars in the sky or sand at the beach. Then, Abraham set out to offer up his son Isaac to God. Isaac grew up to love and honor God with confidence, because he knew what God was yet to do. His promise was secure. His son Jacob also lived a life of faith and kept the blessing of God flowing to his son Joseph, whose descendants would come back to inherit and take over the promise land. Each of these people demonstrated a life of faith lived out. They did not get the promise of the land in their lifetime, but they received so much more—a relationship with God and a place in eternity. Faith is beyond mere belief; it is allowing our confidence in Him for daily living to stretch us beyond what we think we can do, and God will reward us for doing so.

Moses' parents realized their child was special, and as a result, exercised faith by hiding him and then placing him in the Nile. They were not afraid, merely prudent. When Moses grew up, he too exercised faith and refused to seek sin or to be the prince of Egypt. Rather, he identified with his people, shared in their oppression, and helped them to seek "our" God and His reward, pointing to the Messiah to come. Moses left his homeland and all he knew, and by faith, was not afraid, but kept his focus on God. He then stepped up to leadership, challenging Pharaoh to liberate the people of God. He commanded his people to keep the Passover that spared them from the ravages of God's wrath on Egypt. Then, he led the people from captivity into the Promised Land through the Red Sea. The people of the following generation came along in faith by marching around Jericho until its walls came down.

### **Contexts and Background:**

Faith that is manifested personally can show up in history and be an influence to others for all time. Primarily, this passage in context is referring to staying in the church and encouraging those who are discouraged in spite of the hardships the readers and we face. The audience was Jewish Christians thinking about leaving; the author, under the Divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is crafting a careful, effectual argument to keep the faith and be loyal to Christ and the local church. These early Christians had left their families and Synagogues, and are encouraged as so did Abraham and the rest of these godly examples that

displayed faith and courage also went through tribulations. So faith is defined and examples are given from the main Patriarchs of Judaism to encourage them and us to persevere. The reason is because Christ is faithful even when our friends and circumstances are not.

### **Commentary; Word and Phrase Meanings:**

- *God tested.* God seems to be contradicting his divine promise; how can He do that? But this was not about choosing between love and duty. Rather, it was a lesson of trust that Abraham had to learn, and that we have to learn before we can go on to maturity and apply actual faith. God sees if we are genuine and real, such as, is our faith authentic all the time or does it only function when we feel like it? God looks for our authenticity while Satan tempts us to get us in trouble. This is a call to look beyond our experiences and circumstances, to see and seek God, and to place Him first. (Rom. 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3; James 1:12-18).
- *Offered/offered up Isaac.* This was the ultimate test of faith that models what God would do for us to come—offer His Son. Abraham waited a lifetime to have children and when he finally had one, God asked for him. As he was in the act of the sacrifice, God interrupted and intervened to save the son, just as He intervenes to offer His Son for us. He did this to see if Abraham's faith was real or just pretentious, and if his confidence was in God or just in what He had provided. Abraham was confident that God would raise Isaac from the dead. God does not tempt us to see us fail; He seeks to see if we are real. This is why He is the prototypical man of faith for all to emulate (Gen. 15:2; 17:20-21; 22:1-18; John 3:16; Rom 8:32; Heb. 13:20).
- *By faith Isaac.* Isaac continued the legacy of faith, where many beloved sons would have rested on their fathers' laurels and accomplishments and have done nothing for themselves. God deals with individuals; each one needs to take a stand for faith and pass it one to the next generation by teaching, inspiration, and example (Gen. 27:27-40).
- *By faith Jacob.* He was the one to first possess the land as an inheritance. The faith continues to and through the patriarch's lineage and their own mortality of life-spans (Gen. 27:27-29; 48:8-20; 49).
- *By faith Joseph.* Joseph represents the continued hope of a nation and the Messiah Savior to come, now fulfilled in Christ (Gen. 48:13-20; 50:24-25; Ex. 13:19).
- *Moses' parents.* They faced a serious dilemma with their baby son and the Pharaoh's edict to kill all of the Hebrew males at birth, just as the original hearers faced dire situations and choices. By being given real historical

situations, they could know how to reframe their mindsets back to God (Ex 1:16- 22).

- *No ordinary/beautiful child.* Moses' parents somehow knew of God's anointing and that their son was very extraordinary beyond what would be special, and that he would have a role in God's plan of redemption. Jewish mysticism stated Moses was radiant as a child, like a Renaissance painting with a halo that illuminated the room. After he became an adult, he was a military hero, of high intellect, heir to the kingdom, and competitor to the man who did become Pharaoh. This view from the "Jewish Diaspora" was very popular then; however, this is not the point of the passage, which is to show what Moses left behind to follow God (Ex. 2:2; 6:20; Num. 26:58-59; Acts 7:20).
- *Not afraid.* It is natural for a parent to rescue his or her child, but here, this seemed to be the exception, showing a willingness to pay the cost for what is right (Ex. 2:1-3).
- *Refused to be known.* Moses chose to reject his high status and to identify with his people. A powerful illustration and point to people in persecution was that they must focus on Christ. For Greek philosophers and moralists, rejecting pleasure for hardship was a sign of true piety and sincerity. But we do not reject comfort to seek God; rather, we are willing to leave what hinders us to know God more.
- *Pleasures of sin.* Referring to the luxuries, priceless treasures, and status to be a head or a prince in Egypt's royal palace. Not necessarily just pursuing immorality, but showing what was left behind to identify with compassion and to help his people's plight.
- *Chose to be mistreated.* Encouragement for people who had undergone loss, expulsion from their family and former faith, insult, and oppression for the cause of Christ (Heb. 10:33-34).
- *The sake of Christ.* Moses was an example of deliverance, of what a Messiah is to be—he by physically releasing God's people from bondage, and Christ by releasing us from the bondage of sin. Moses was also an example of hope. This was to encourage people to think about what glorifies Christ, not just what suits their own pleasure.
- *Left Egypt.* Meaning Moses persevered and demonstrated unshakable faith and confidence, even though he feared what Pharaoh might do to him after he killed an Egyptian. Yet, he trusted in God and made plans for his provision. It took great faith to leave behind everything to go to Midian—his family, riches, and fame—to go to a new land, and again, it took great faith to come back and be a part of God's redemptive plan for the Israelites. Thus Moses started small in faith, the micro for his own provision and macro to the nation's

provision in the *Exodus*. When we fear God, as in have reverence for Him, we have no need to fear our fellow man or our circumstances; we too can grow a great faith (Ex. 2:11-15; Acts 7:23-30).

- *Who is invisible*. A Jewish mystic name for God, that you can trust Him for He exists and is involved, like the wind that is not seen but its evidence is (Rom. 1:20).
- *Passover*. Encompassing not just the ritual, but all that took place to confront and confound Pharaoh and lead the people out of captivity. Knowing that God was there gave Moses unshakable confidence to the extent that God used him for the Bible's greatest signs and wonders such as the parting of the Red Sea
- *Sprinkling of blood*. Meaning deliverance—what Moses did for his people as an example and what Christ does for all whose faith is in Him. Refers to the Passover where blood was placed on the doorframes of the homes so the angel of death would “pass over” and not take the first born son as he did with the Egyptians (Ex. 12:1-13).
- *Through the Red Sea*. “Sea of Reeds,” which is no less of a miracle. This gave more evidence to a struggling people of the power and purpose of God, to prove they could trust in Him. They could not rely on the merit of Abraham and their ancestors; they had to take personal ownership of their faith (Ex. 14-15; Deut 34:1-7; Neh. 9:11).
- *Jericho fell*. An example of faith: after Moses, Joshua took his place as leader, and led the people into the Promise Land to attack the biggest and most fortified city—first by using means that may have seemed foolish, so that the new generation could learn obedience, confidence, and trust in God. The conquest of the land was not just about war; it was a battle of faith and the obstacles thereof (Jos. 6; 24:15).

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

Abraham's example of impudence, producing the thorn in his heritage's side as well as his doubts and saying his wife was his sister, demonstrated his authenticity to the “regular” people (as we all are.) We all make mistakes, and God is there with his forgiveness and restoration. At the end of the day, he is faithful—and we can be too!

The context to this faith is that it is connected to hope. Hope is not desire or a wish as we use the term today, like we hope our football team wins, rather it is a confidence and trust that God's promise and Jesus is real and guaranteed. It is an assurance, as in an anchor for our soul and life. This hope is also a focus point for us to be successful with our faith and life, if we just focus on our

problems and only worry on it; we accomplish nothing, if we focus on Christ for His empowerment we succeed. Yet, real faith is still trusting what is not always seen and still believing our God! Real faith constitutes who we are, that what we believe has become more than just a view and a mindset; it has become who we are and what we do. Our authentic faith is secured in Christ, which starts at our acceptance of His transforming power of grace and is fueled when we realize no matter what happens, *all things work for good* for His glory. We can have confidence and trust because Christ personally loves, cares for, and deals with us. We have Him in our lives for daily empowerment and living so we can stretch beyond what we think is common sense, and have hope so we can be active in Him. This is not just an intellectual or academic way of thinking, although we do need to believe; it is the exercise of what we accept as true so we will go out and do. What God gives us and what prospects He brings can be seen as opportunities to learn, grow, and serve, not just in concept, but in action. Then our faith becomes righteousness because we trust and believe and grow to be limitless in Christ (Matt. 6:33; John 14:9; Rom 8).

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. Who have you seen, a person in history or a story of today; demonstrate a life of faith lived out? How did this person encourage and influence you?
2. How is faith related to hope? What are the obstacles you face and how can you overcome them?
3. How have you described the passion and conviction of your faith to someone? How have you modeled or demonstrated it?
4. How does stepping up to leadership show an exercise of faith? How would you know the difference between pride and desire and accepting God's call with humility?

5. What is the difference and balance between not being afraid and being prudent? Can you give an example?
6. Examine your life so far; what is your attitude toward faith and doing as Christ has called and demonstrated?
7. What stops you in your willingness to venture out with your faith and go where He leads you?
8. Why does God look for authenticity? How does our confidence in God produce authenticity? How would this improve your life?
9. What lessons do you think you need to learn before you can venture further into maturity and apply actual faith? What gets in the way? What do you need to do?
10. Why must faith be beyond just mere belief? How have you placed your confidence in Christ for daily living? What have you done in the past that required you to stretch beyond what you thought you could do? How did God reward you for doing so?
11. If God were to test you to see if your faith was genuine and real, what would He find? Why would you fear such a test? What do you need to do to welcome such a test?
12. What can you do to live out your Christian life with eyes and trust upon Christ and not on your circumstances?