

Hebrews 11:2-3 Through Faith We Understand

- Last time we were together we began our journey through HEBREWS 11 with a definition of sorts for the concept of FAITH
 - That, as VERSE 1 tells us, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen
 - We then just kind of brushed by VERSES 2-5 on our way to a concluding thought in VERSE 6 that lays out the importance of our considerations on these matters
- Why does it matter that we understand faith?
 - Why does it matter that we walk in faith?
- Because without faith it is impossible to please God
- Now most of HEBREWS 11 consists of examples of faith
 - Or more specifically as we'll consider today
 - TESTIMONIES of faith
- It comprises brief references to those who have gone before
 - Linking in our minds the definition and proposition of faith as it has been given in VERSE 1
 - To the outward manifestations of that faith throughout history
- And we talked last time about how important those outward manifestations of faith are to the definition of faith
 - Because, as the book of JAMES tells us, faith is justified by works
 - JAMES does NOT say that WE are justified by works – for before God judicially we are justified by faith
 - But that faith IS justified by works
 - Meaning that the only thing which validates whether or not I truly have faith is what is produced in my life
 - So that faith without works is dead, being alone →

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- To this end these examples of faith that we will consider throughout the chapter are truly essential
 - For in them we see what the fruit of faith looks like
 - With Paul, from time to time, bringing the listener to a sort of “checkpoint” where he brings emphasis to the faith mindset that compelled the works which each individual enacted in their lives
- And as we have emphasized throughout the book, so I do again
 - As Paul gives these many examples of faith
 - He does so with the expectation that the Hebrew audience unto whom he speaks is intimately familiar with each historical account that he is referencing from the OT Scriptures
 - He doesn't take time to teach these accounts themselves because he is assuming upon their knowledge
 - And as he has done throughout the book
 - He uses OT Scriptures as he continues to prove the superiority of this “new way” in Christ THROUGH the testimony of the Old Way that has been fulfilled and so replaced
 - Proving that the law and the prophets itself testified of the better way into which we have been ushered through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross
- Now as it relates to our study, unlike much of the rest of the book, I am going to approach these accounts in a generally more survey fashion as well
 - There are so many OT references, each with their own context and back story, that to teach on each would be to slow us down way too much →

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- But we will talk about them in survey fashion
 - Always with an eye toward the thing which this chapter is intended to focus upon
 - Which the way in which each of these historical figures
 - Flawed though many of them were
 - Revealed a heart of faith in the revealed Word of God
- And we know that this is the focus of this chapter because of what we read in VERSE 2 →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:2

For by it the elders **obtained a good report.**

μαρτυρέω – to witness, testify

- READ
- By IT the elders obtained a good report
- By what?
 - By faith
- Now the phrase “obtained a good report” is the translation of a single word in the Greek
 - It is the Greek word meaning “to witness” or to “testify”
 - And for the Tuesday crowd we find that it is in the passive voice
 - Meaning that the subject is receiving the action
- So this is not something that that produced
 - But something that they received
- That they received a testimony of faith
 - And this testimony is rooted in their legacy, their actions
 - The product of their life was such that it bears record of one who had faith
 - And that is why we study them
- Remember the words of Paul in ROMANS 15:4 →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Romans 15:4

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

- READ
- The things that were recorded in the OT Scriptures were recorded for our learning
 - The men and women that are there
 - The events that were included
 - They were included by God specifically for the learning of those who would come later and read them
- And by extension, the things which were not included
 - Though our curiosity may long to know them
 - Were not included because God determined that they were not needed
 - That they would not be beneficial toward His purpose of revealing Himself to man
- And it is passages like this that remind us that
 - Even though Paul was speaking to a Hebrew audience
 - And much of what he says is very Hebrew in context
 - It is recorded as much for our learning and it was given for their learning →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:2

For by it the elders **obtained a good report.**

μαρτυρέω – to witness, testify

- So the elders obtained a good report – earned a testimony of faith – through the fruit of their actions during their lives
 - And would to God we would each have the same
 - That our legacy in the minds and hearts of our children and grandchildren would be dominated by the distinct impression of faithfulness to the God of the Bible
- That their memories would not be simply of fleeting, comical, or any necessarily material product
 - But of a man or a woman of faithfulness
 - Of urgency unto righteousness
 - Of the distinctions of a life of faith
- And as Paul walks through these accounts, he does so in a generally chronological order
- Beginning NOT with a specific man or woman
 - But with a broader determination of simple faith
 - In some ways the most foundational of simple faith concepts
 - Of which we read in VERSE 3 →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:3

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

- READ
- What does faith look like?
 - Faith looks like taking God at His Word
- That when the Bible says that the worlds were framed by the word of God
 - And then Paul clarifies that this means the things which are seen
 - The things of the material world
 - The things which we can see with our eyes
 - And feel with our hands
 - And taste with our mouths
 - These things were not made of things which do appear
 - They were not made from other material things
 - But by the word of God
- We talked about this with some measure of deeper clarity in our GENESIS series not long ago
 - Here I am only going to summarize what we spoke of in more detail in that series
 - I encourage you to go back and listen to those sermons if the things I am about to mention don't make sense to you
 - That when we consider all of the various claims regarding the origin
- The Bible claims that God created the heaven, the earth, and all that in them is in 6 literal, 24 hour days
 - And that at the end of these 6 literal, 24 hour days the universe was complete, formed, and fully functioning →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:3

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

- And we haven't talked yet in GENESIS about the curse or the flood
 - But when we say that the world was complete and fully functioning
 - That doesn't necessarily mean it was functioning the way we see the world today
- After creation mankind rebelled against God and fell into sin, subjected the created world to that sinful condition, so that all creation began to groan under the curse of man's sin
- Then several thousand years later mankind had corrupted itself so much upon the earth that God sent a flood
 - At that time rains poured down upon the earth, but perhaps more significantly the fountains of the deep broke up
 - A cataclysm which had the potential to fundamentally change the topography, climate, and distribution of creatures on the earth
- So that the way things are now is very likely NOT the way they were at the time of the flood some 4500 years ago, much less before the curse 2000 years before that
- But the Scriptures testify that by the end of the 6 days of creation God made man, fully formed
 - Made the creatures, fully formed
 - Made the eco-system for them, fully formed
 - A fully functioning world
- Not a bunch of single-celled organisms which would be eventually directed into sentient life
- But a fully functioning world →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:3

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

- And as Paul seeks to exemplify the nature of faith here in this portion of HEBREWS which exists specifically to help us understand what faith looks like
 - He begins by saying that faith takes God at His Word as it relates to the account of creation
- And this is no trivial matter, is it?
 - For the past couple of Tuesdays we have been studying through PSALM 19
 - A message which bears a striking resemblance to the teaching of Paul in ROMANS 1:18-32
- Each of which states that the created world testifies of the existence of the Creator Himself
 - But as Paul elaborates upon this in ROMANS 1
 - When man at once wants to deny the authority of God over their lives
 - One of the first things which they must do is deny the creative power of God
 - Because as we have covered in our Genesis series
 - If God created the system
 - And is outside of the system
 - Then he has absolute authority and power
- So the Bible says in ROMANS 1 →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Romans 1:18-23

(18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; (19) Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. (20) For the invisible things of him from the creation

- READ
- CONTINUE →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Romans 1:18-23

of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (21) Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their

- READ
- CONTINUE →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Romans 1:18-23

foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (23) And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

- READ
- So the Bible says that
 - When at once created man has an impulse to deny his creator
 - One of his fundamental orders of business is to go about replacing him with something else
 - A false god
 - Be it the trees
 - Or four-footed beasts
 - Or an institution
 - Or another man
 - And the power of a false god is that they are WITHIN the system
 - Which means they only have authority to the extent that they maintain power
 - Or to the extent that any individual feels compelled to give them power
 - Which means that those gods can be cajoled, manipulated, corrupted, and the like
 - And this comforts mankind, because he can retain his own decisions and desires through this process of interacting with a god of this world
 - But faith compels the hearers to a different path →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:3

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

- One where God exists outside the system
 - One where God is not LIKE corrupted and fallen man
 - But above man, beyond man
 - Not corruptible, not changeable, not manipulatable
- Which means if I am going to come to God, it must be on his terms
 - And isn't this what VERSE 6 will say →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

- READ
- If a man wants to please the CREATOR God, he must come to God on God's terms
- So that even when he doesn't necessarily understand
- Even when things don't make sense from a material or experiential standpoint
- There is a confidence in knowing that if God's said it, it is true
- That any failure is not a failure of God, of His Word, or of His operational paradigm
 - But much to the contrary
 - Is a failure of my understanding
 - Because I am not God
- This is a heart of faith

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:3

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

- And by this standard we understand, through faith
 - That the worlds were not derived through random chance
 - Or even directed processes as the material world formed through itself the functioning world as we see it today
 - But rather that the worlds were framed by the Word of God
 - And the things which you see in the natural world were not made of other things in the natural world
 - But made by the special creation of God
- So that faith is passing our understanding of this life
 - Material, emotional, and spiritual
 - Through the lens of God's truth claims
 - And then allowing that perspective to be the foundation upon which our thoughts, actions, and intentions are built
- And this is faith
 - When what God has said not only becomes what we claim
 - But when what God has said becomes the basis for our understanding, our actions, and our reactions
- And so as we seek to frame this concept in our minds
 - And as we walk through examples of men and women who exhibited in their lives the realities of faith
 - And are edified through them to exercise faith in our own lives
- I want to present to you one more perspective on what faith looks like
- We all know Job to have been a man of great faith
 - Interestingly enough, Job is not cited in HEBREWS 11
 - But I want to take you to his words anyway →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:3

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

- Because Job gives us substantial insight into the kind of faith that HEBREWS 11:3 talks about
 - The kind of faith that relies upon the testimony of an evidently faithful God in areas of life which are not observable, testable, and repeatable
 - Such as origins
- In JOB 23 Job was in great confusion
 - Wishing that he could confront God personally in order to appeal to him in the midst of suffering
 - But even in this state of confusion about his circumstances
 - Job was never confused about who God was and where God stood
- So JOB says →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Job 23:8-12

(8) Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
and backward, but I cannot perceive him: (9)
On the left hand, where he doth work, but I
cannot behold him: he hideth himself on
the right hand, that I cannot see him: (10)
But he knoweth the way that I take: when he
hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

- READ
- So Job is confused
 - Full of pain and sorrow
 - He can't find God, and he doesn't understand what is happening
- But he reflects a confidence
 - That though he doesn't know God
 - God knows him
 - Though he doesn't understand
 - God does understand
- And when the circumstances at hand come to an end
 - Job will be the better for it
- And he explains the root of his confidence in VERSES 11-12 →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Job 23:8-12

(11) My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. (12) Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

- READ →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Job 23:12

Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

- READ YELLOW
- This is the testimony of a man who regards the truth claims which come from the living God as more valuable
 - AND MORE REAL
 - Than what they can taste, touch, see, or smell
- The promises of God to those who obey him was SO REAL to Job
 - That they overrode in his heart, mind, and emotions even the difficult circumstances within which he lived at that moment
- This concept would be echoed in the law in DEUTERONOMY 8:3, a passage which Jesus would quote in MATTHEW 4:4 while being tempted by the devil →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Matthew 4:4b

...It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

- READ
- This is the testimony of a mind of faith
- So that when we read HEBREWS 11:3
- And it says →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:3

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

- By faith we “understand”
 - Not “by faith we hope”
 - Or “by faith we guess”
 - Or “by faith we figure”
- But “by faith we understand”
 - Our understanding
 - Our confidence
 - And by virtue of these things our actions and determinations
- Are shaped as much by faith in the Word of God
 - As by faith in our senses
- And this is what I would like for us to carry away with us
- I don’t know what you have been going through of late, per se
- But I know that every believer in this room is at some point in your faith journey
 - Things which, by faith, you have accepted with joy
 - And other divine claims for which you are at a crossroads
 - Will you do it God’s way or your way?
 - Will you believe God’s word or man’s word?
- Maybe the battle is over “going”
 - Maybe the battle is over “staying”
 - Maybe “doing”, maybe “waiting”
 - And you have ideas
 - And your friends have ideas
 - And society has ideas →

Understand Hebrews 11:2-3

Hebrews 11:3

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

- And maybe you know what you feel
 - And what you want
 - And what you think
- But have you esteemed the words of God's mouth more than necessary food
 - Have you filtered these circumstances through the truth that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God
- Are you already determined that you are going to do things God's way?
- That the essence of your understanding will first be founded upon the truth claims of the eternal God
- So that your expectation in the Words of God become the substance of your understanding
- And this begins with the GOSPEL
- Then it moves to every part of the Christian life
- That is what we're talking about
 - That is what the whole of HEBREWS has talked about
 - Not falling short of this confidence
 - Are you falling short of that confidence?
 - Are you willing to trust God's Word
 - To do it his way
 - It a simple idea
 - Not always an easy idea
 - But rest assured, it is always a blessed idea