



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Study 05:

THE PERSEVERANCE OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:13-16

“We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard” (Hebrews 2:1). More especially we do need to pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is teaching us today in this passage on the subject of faith. Many preachers and teachers are confused and they misinterpret this passage: ***“These all died in faith, NOT HAVING RECEIVED the promises”*** (Hebrews 11:13). They fail to rightly divide the Word of truth and so weaken the faith of many. This chapter uses the word “receive” a number of times: ***“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed”***. ***“These all died in faith, not having received the promises”*** ***“...and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son”***, ***“Women received their dead raised to life again”***, ***“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise”*** (Hebrews 11:11,13,17,35,39). Scriptural interpretation (fully treated in the third section of this study) will remove all confusions.

The faith of Bible believers was (and is) incorruptible and could not be conquered by adverse circumstances. The eye of their hearts saw clearly the blessings God had promised and they were persuaded that they would be theirs in due season. The Scriptures commend the perseverance of the Old Testament believers. Despite all the assaults of temptations and trials around them, they persisted in clinging to God and His Word. They lived by faith and died in faith.

THE CONSTANCY OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:13-14; Genesis 25:5,8; 48:21; 49:28-31; 50:24; 1 Kings 8:56; Numbers 24:17,19; Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 9:6; John 8:56.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises...” Each one of the Old Testament characters died in the firm expectation of the promised Messiah, believing and beholding the heavenly glory afar off. Their eyes of faith were strong, they were endowed with long-distant spiritual vision. With the telescope of faith, they saw them afar off, were fully persuaded and embraced them (Hebrews 11:13). Faith sees the invisible clearly, brings strong persuasion in the heart and makes us to embrace God’s promises.

“These all died in faith”. To die in faith is to have an assured confidence in God till and at the point of death. They had a firm belief in the reality and existence of life and fellowship with God after death. They entrusted their departing souls into the care of a loving and faithful God. They had strong faith believing in the final, blessed rest in the heavenly country prepared for them by God. Their chief aim and supreme desire was to lay aside all hindrances, live like ***“strangers and pilgrims on the earth”***, ***“[seeking] those things which are above... [setting their] affection on things above, not on things on the earth”*** (Colossians 3:1-2).

Do you have such faith that sees the promises afar off; being fully persuaded, do you fully and firmly embrace those promises? Are God’s promises really precious to us? Do our hearts cling to them with love and delight? Do we plead those promises before the Throne of Grace? Does our daily walk show that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, that we are ***“partakers of the heavenly calling”***?

THE COMMITMENT OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:15-16; Genesis 24:6-8; Job 17:9; Psalm 112:7; Proverbs 24:21; Galatians 2:18; Psalms 27:4; 73:25.

The patriarchs remained in the land where God placed them because they surrendered to the total control of God. If they had desired to return to the idolatrous land from which they were called, the opportunities were many, instead of going back, they persevered in the path which God appointed for them. Despite all discouragements, trials and difficulties, they committed themselves to following that course marked out for them by God. So firm was Abraham's conviction and commitment that he would not go back to his native land nor allow Isaac, his son, to go there to take a wife. We, too, should manifest such commitment of faith. Though enticements abound on every hand tempting us to go back to the world and its vanities, we must keep on looking unto Jesus, fixing our hearts on heaven and its glories.

The heavenly country was ever on the hearts of the Patriarchs as: (1) Abraham ***“looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”*** (Hebrews 11:10). (2) They ***“confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”*** (Hebrews 11:13). (3) ***“They seek a country”*** (Hebrews 11:14). (4) ***“They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly”*** (Hebrews 11:16), (5) They ***“declare plainly that they seek a country”*** (Hebrews 11:14). Are we so desirous of that better country - the heavenly country? Then earthly things will not hold our hearts captive.

THE CATALOGUE OF BENEFITS THROUGH FAITH

Hebrews 11:11,13,17,35,39; Psalm 103:1-5; 1 Kings 8:56; Isaiah 38:1-5,17; Psalm 51:12; 68:19; James 5:11,16-18.

This chapter reveals that the Old Testament believers received the fulfilment of many promises. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua and many others received the promises (Hebrews 11:11,17,35; Genesis 12:2; 13:2; 26:12,13; 45:9-13; Deuteronomy 1:10). Also, many individuals in Israel received many blessings by faith. They received **salvation** (Psalms 51:12; 32:1,2), **healing** (Exodus 15:26; Psalms 103:3; 107:20), **deliverance** (Psalm 34:4,19), **sanctification** (Leviticus 20:8; Isaiah 6:5-7), **protection** and **preservation** (Isaiah 43:2; Daniel 3:20-25; 6:19-22), and answers to prayers (Psalms 66:19,20; 68:19).

Yet, ***“these all died in faith, not having received the promises”*** (Hebrews 11:13,39). What promises were they not able to receive? Israel became a great nation after Abraham's death (Genesis 12:2). All the families of the earth being blessed through Abraham was fulfilled with the coming of Christ (Genesis 12:3). Prophecies concerning the Messiah and the fullness of the Holy Spirit were later fulfilled but not during the lifetime of the Old Testament saints. God is faithful. Now, we can receive all He has promised us.

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