



## **The Trump Card**

### **Hebrews 11:17-31**

Have you ever played the card game of Euchre?

In Euchre one of the suits, one of either Diamonds, Hearts, Spades or Clubs is named the, “Trump,” suite for the particular hand being played. The Trump Suite is special and beats every other suite no matter what the card face value is. Yet within the Trump Suite there is a special card. A special card within a special suite. The card is the Jack of that suite, which is also called the Right Bower. That card, that Jack of the Trump Suite, the right Bower, beats every other card. The holder of the right bower knows that no matter what else happens, he is going to win the particular round in which he plays the Trump Card. Why? Because the Trump Card always wins. It’s the nature of the Trump card to win. Every. Single. Time.

So, I find myself pondering the question, “What if I had a Trump card for my life?” “For my daily, moment by moment, ordinary, mundane life?” What if in every circumstance I encounter, or said in the vernacular of Euchre, what if in every round I played, I always had the Trump Card, the right bower? What would that even mean, and what would it actually look like to live like that? No matter what happens; good, bad or something somewhere in the middle, BAM I play my TRUMP card and win?!?

What does it even mean to win? That’s a deeper philosophical question, too.

One thing I know, and one of my favorite aspects of being a Christian and living my faith journey, my path of sanctification is to know the truth of Ephesians 4:17.

“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.” –Eph. 4:17

Apparently the mind of the Gentile, which I will equate to the mind of the natural, unredeemed, unsaved man, is futile. It a mind that ultimately leads to a life of pointless vanity resulting in nothingness. It’s futile.

But, the life of faith in Christ is not that, it’s not a walk, or a lifestyle, baked in futile thought and futile action. It is different.

In fact, we get a further glimpse of the life of faith, the life that is, “By Faith,” when we read this passage in Paul’s letter to the Romans:

“And we know that for those who love God (insert, ‘those who live by faith,’) all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Rom. 8:28-29

So the life of faith is not futile, like the life without faith, and that “all” things work together for a particular purpose, namely conforming the life of the Christian (the one who loves God, the one who lives by faith) into the image of Christ.

This is very cool! It’s starting to sound like something that resembles a figurative Trump Card.

“All” things. No futility. It’s worth thinking more about.

But there is more than that in our faith journey. The story of the Trump Card isn’t complete with just the ideas we have taken a quick look at.

And this is the point of the author of Hebrews in the passage we will look at today.

Our conversational journey today is going to take us through three broad points as we explore Hebrews 11:17-31. Go ahead and turn there if you’d like, you can get a head start on me. I’ll catch up, I promise😊

We will first look at the overall context of the passage and how it is framed within the book of Hebrews and how the author is addressing the reader. In doing this will look at how the author is building the overall persuasive argument, or logic, different attributes of faith that we can draw out of the overall context and then how the author structured the passage to provide a more focused context.

Then we will move into and be stirred in the Presence of Real Faith, looking at the Faith of those whom the author of Hebrews highlights in the passage. We will see nuance, conflict, the look of radicalness, risk and the clarity that real faith provides. We will be moved, stirred, inside, as we explore real faith.

Finally, we will close by circling back on the concept of, “The Trump Card.” It’s the best part, and it’s right where the author of Hebrews is taking us. I promise we won’t skip this part and we won’t end early, I promise. We have to cover the other items first but I can’t wait to get to this final part!

So if you haven’t already please open your bibles to Heb. 11:17-31

Read the Passage, Heb. 11:17-31

**Heb 11:17** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son,

**Heb 11:18** of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

**Heb 11:19** He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

**Heb 11:20** By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

**Heb 11:21** By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

**Heb 11:22** By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

**Heb 11:23** By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

**Heb 11:24** By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

**Heb 11:25** choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

**Heb 11:26** He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Heb 11:27 By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Heb 11:28 By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

Heb 11:29 By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

Heb 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

Heb 11:31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

A reasonable first question to ask as we read this passage is around what point the author is seeking to make. Why is he telling us this, how does it support his conclusion. Which means it would be very helpful to know his conclusion.

Sometimes figuring out the conclusion is hard work and keeps you guessing, studying and speculating, working out your study while keenly aware of your need to have the Holy Spirit illuminate your understanding.

Other times, like this one, the author just tells you his conclusion and so it makes your work much easier (though still completely dependent on the Holy Spirit for illumination, as we will get to).

The point that the author is driving us to is found in Hebrews 12:1-2:

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Heb 12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The author is telling us to live by faith. He describes it in 12:1 as running with endurance, but it's the life of faith he is seeking to inspire us to. He is doing it by:

Starting us with a contrast between those who have faith and those who don't.

Heb 10:39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

The author is building to his, "Therefore," conclusion in 12:1 and starts us in chapter 10 by creating a tension between those who live a life of faith and those who do not. He affirms that the audience he is addressing is the audience who, "...have faith..." and then he starts a persuasive argument designed to motivate his audience, the Hebrews and us, to move aggressively forward in our faith journeys.

Now that we know the point, or where this line of reasoning is going to take us (by us I mean those who have faith), let's look at a few attributes of faith in a broad sense, shall we?

The look at attributes of faith that we are going to take is not, by any means, designed to be a holistic look at the topic of faith. Rather, it is designed to help us get into the mindset of both the author and the Hebrew reader so that we are better equipped to feel the weight of the argument that the author is making.

Here are the four attributes of faith we will be taking a look at:

1. Faith was a concept readily understood by the audience
2. Faith, as understood by the author and reader, was more than simply rational
3. Faith, by way of reminder, has a radical element to it
4. Faith has a communal element to it

The greek word used for faith is the word, "Pistis." It is used 244 times in the NT. It is the word used for, "faith," in Heb. 10:39, where the author starts this section of reasoning, and the word used for faith throughout chapter 11.

A couple other NT passage, of the 244 times, where Pistis is used help broaden the meaning the author and reader would have had when using this word to explain the idea of faith.

Mar 2:5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Note here that faith was observable. Jesus, "saw," it.

You might want to look at this longer section of scripture where Paul defends himself before King Agrippa. He contrasts very clearly the life he lived (the stuff he did) before he had faith to the stuff he did after he had faith.

Act 25:25 But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him.

Act 26:1 So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

Act 26:5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.

Act 26:16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,

Act 26:17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you

Act 26:18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Both the absence and presence of faith was seen in Paul's life.

In fact Jesus little brother, James, famously writes:

Jas 2:17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

The same greek word, pistis, is used in all these contexts.

The idea of faith was commonly understood as being defined something like:

A persuaded moral conviction and intellectual assent that moves us to action

This is the idea of faith we see in each of the, "hero's," of faith listed in Hebrews 11.

- Persuaded – volitional choice
- Moral – it has a sense of right and wrong associated with it. We can further say that it is a sense of objective, or absolutely, moral right and wrong.
- Conviction: We individually hold it as true
- Intellectual: it is rational and violates no sense of logical order
- Moves to action: It isn't just agreement with a set of facts, it moves us as a foundational motivator.

This is what we see in the characters listed in this section of scripture.

Faith was a commonly understood concept.

Another attribute of faith that we see is that faith is more than simply rational.

There is nothing about faith that violates the principles of order and logic, yet the principles of order and logic never conclude with having faith.

Faith is seeing the same set of facts yet seen with a different lens; a different paradigm.

One commentator whom I read put it this way: "Christianity is supernatural, and it is to be lived supernaturally."

Paul tells us Romans 1:19-20 that unrighteous men (those who are not saved) can rationally know important truths about God:

Rom 1:19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

Rom 1:20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Natural man has enough rational responsibility such that God rightly, soberly, justly will condemn them.

Yet that through itself is only embraced through the super-rational gift of faith imparted to a man through grace.

Consider:

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

Eph 2:9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Along with:

1Co 2:13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

1Co 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Of course the word for faith in Eph. 2:8 is, "Pistis," and the idea matches with our definition and the truth of Eph. 2:10. Contrasted with the, "natural person," of 1 Cor. 2:14, for whom the invisible attributes of God's eternal power and divine nature are clearly perceived (rational) we see that faith is more than just rational. Faith is a gift of God.

This is the kind of faith that we see in the characters of Hebrews 11 and the kind of faith the author is drawing our attention to.

Faith has a radical element to it.

Look at the "wildness" we see in identified in Chapter 11:

- V. 3 – Faith informs our understanding of the first cause of the entire universe
- V. 7 – Noah builds a boat because it's going to do something called, "rain," and then, "flood." No one knows what he is talking about.
- V. 8 – Abraham left it all to go, "...out, not knowing where he was going."
- V.11 – Sarah, a 90 year old woman, get's pregnant by faith (er, faith IS expressed in action....right©)
- V.17 – Abraham sacrificed his son
- V.24 – Moses left his inheritance and legacy in Egypt, risked death for defying Pharaoh, was mistreated and received reproach
- V.28 – Moses kept the Passover
- V.29 – People crossed through the red sea
- V. 30 – People marched around Jericho
- V. 31 – Rahab risked her life

These, "by faith," actions are just a sample of what we could call out and, at first glance, seem radical, or wild.

There is a radical element to them, yet the idea here ties into the first point that faith isn't simply rational yet it is completely rational.

We will see more as we continue.

Looking at Heb. 11 verses 28-30, we see the communal element to faith. Moses, and the Israelites, kept the Passover. Moses, and the people, crossed the Red Sea on dry land. The Israelite community marched around Jericho.

In fact, we looked at the author's conclusion, that we are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses, and that the cloud, this community of witnesses, serves to motivate us to live a different kind of life.

Faith is individual, yes, but it isn't to be individualistic. It is an individual faith that brings each one into the context of a community of faith, e.g. the body of Christ.

We must not overlook our role in the community of Christ, the body of Christ, and view our faith as merely between us and God. Faith brings us individually into a community, into the body of Christ and includes us in the present-day, "cloud of witnesses!"

Remember, the author is writing to a persecuted community of Christians in Rome and is motivating them by the, "cloud," of witnesses that they are familiar with, with the point being that their faith, as the faith of the entire cloud, points to Jesus.

Faith has a communal element to it.

So now we have looked at the author's point, which we found in Hebrews 12:1-2, and we have looked at four attributes of this idea of faith that the author is focused so intensely on. Now, before looking more specifically at the passage for today, let's use the Structure Tool to help round out our understanding of the context.

If you were part of the Hermeneutics class that Ben taught then you are familiar with the book Dig Deeper. This book provides many tools to use in seeking to understand a particular passage of Scripture. Two weeks ago Jeff highlighted this book as well and used the idea of a Chiasm to explain and focus on Enoch's walk of faith.

We have already used the, "Author's Purpose," tool to answer the question, "What's the point," and now we will use the Structure Tool to draw a focus on the, "bookends," on either side of today's passage.

A pair of bookends, Dig Deeper tells us on page 42, signals that everything in between belongs together.

Our bookends are found in Hebrews 11:13

Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Heb 11:39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

The idea contained in the bookends is that these people of faith, the people of faith just like ours (reference Heb. 10:39) lived a life of faith, a faith that was pleasing to God, and that was commonly understood, beyond simply rational, a bit radical and communal, and yet died having not received the, "things promised."

Though out the book of Hebrews we have seen the author leverage the symbolic meanings from the OT as pointers to the greater, superior, truths that we now know about Jesus.

Recall Jesus Superiority:

- Superior to Angelic Beings (1:1-2:18)
  - A Superior Word
- Superior to the Mosaic Law (3:1-10:18)

- Superior to Moses
- Superior Priesthood
- Superior Covenant
- Superior Sacrifice

The place where I believe the author is now taking us is that Jesus is the superior motivation promise to us who are now joined together in a community of faith and sharing our faith-journey, our sanctification, with one another.

All this, “stuff in the middle,” the stuff between our two bookends, is stories of a community of people, a Cloud of Witnesses, who had great promises from God and who, by faith, lived a life motivated by God’s Character (His nature of keeping His promises). Then, the author takes us to 12:1-2 and points to Jesus, describing Jesus motivation as the, Joy that was set before him, namely, His being seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Fellowship with God, having done the Father’s will, for eternity.

Consider a few of the following points:

- OT Patriarch’s were spoken to by the prophets. In these “last days” we have Jesus to speak a Superior Word
  - Heb 1:1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
  - Heb 1:2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
- They had a lesser promise motivating their faith, we have Jesus as the superior promise:
  - 2Pe 1:17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"
  - 2Pe 1:18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.
  - 2Pe 1:19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,
  - 2Pe 1:20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.  
The Word we have is even superior not only to the Prophets (as Jesus is Superior) but is more fully confirmed than even experiencing something like the transfiguration.

This is the Bible that you now hold in your hands. More fully confirmed than even Peter’s experience at the transfiguration.

- More than the Hero’s of faith who are listed between the bookends we have:
  - 1Pe 1:10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,
  - 1Pe 1:11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.
  - 1Pe 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

The Prophets foretold of the grace that is now ours, the patriarchs lived motivated by promises that were pointers and symbols for the promises we now have, and angels long to look into the rich promises that our now ours in Christ.

Further;

Eph 3:8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Eph 3:9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things,

Eph 3:10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Eph 3:11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Eph 3:12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

So that's our backdrop, our context, as we prepare now to look into the real life faith of real life people.

But I'd like to pause and ask the question - What if I die in faith?

What if, like the bookends point to, I die in faith having not received the promises? Is that okay with me? Am I motivated by the promises I have, superior to the promises of the OT believers, even if I die in faith and do not receive them.

Or, do I place conditions on my life of faith:

As long as I have a comfy life and then die in faith then I'm okay with it? This is how I live many/most days, if I am honest.

What if my life is somewhat uncomfortable?

- Lose my job
- Retirement savings blows up
- Health issues slow me
- What if it is extremely uncomfortable?
- Lose my children unexpectedly
- Lose my wife/spouse unexpectedly?
- Critical Health Issue
- Jailed unjustly
- Beaten/verbally assaulted?

Honestly, many of us, myself included, live many days unable to, by faith, endure a cross word, a sleepless night, a rude waitress, the internet being down, our cell phone being lost, a car cutting me off in traffic, any circumstance in which I have to wait, not being listened to by my spouse, being thought foolish, being thought unattractive, being different, being unsure of what is going to happen tomorrow, or the next day, or the one after that...

Where does my life, "By Faith," start to break down?

If I can start to see this then the cloud of witnesses starts to inform me, starts to motivate me, and points me to the better promise, the higher promise, the more sure testimony of Jesus. From where my life, by faith, is challenge is the same from where that I must look to Jesus, the Author and Perfector of my faith.

Story of Yemen converts, who had families, came to Jesus and a week later were dead.

They are with Jesus, they are fine. They would argue now that it was worth it

What if you were one of their children, or their wife, and now lived in poverty and oppression? This is the kind of faith we are talking about here.

On our journey now, with Context fully in mind and the challenge of a life by faith before us, let us look at the presence of the real faith in this, "cloud of witnesses," and be stirred, be moved, by what we see.

By Faith Abraham....V.17

- How did Abraham know it was God? This ISN'T the author's point or theme and the text isn't designed to explicitly address that

- He did know it was God
- He found it authoritative and credible
- His instructions were clear
- The point is faith-fueled obedience of the clear commands of scripture. Not chasing a red-herring and never actually obeying on your faith-journey. Don't get caught in the web of confusion the devil will weave.
- Sacrifice of Isaac was completely rational from the paradigm of Abraham's faith and the truth of God
  - Abraham really did sacrifice Isaac. He did not hold Isaac back and would have completed the act did God not intervene. He considered God had the capability to keep his promise even though he did not see exactly how it would work out. It was a real, completed act, as he offered him up and he received him back from the dead.
- James explains the offering as a completed sacrifice and as evidence of faith:
  - Jas 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?
  - Jas 2:22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;
- A few points of interest
  - Isaac – as the “monogenes,” one of a kind only son, not the only physical son
  - Reference Gen. 22:1-12
    - Gen 22:1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."
    - Gen 22:2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."
    - Gen 22:3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.
    - Gen 22:4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.
    - Gen 22:5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."
    - Gen 22:6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.
    - Gen 22:7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"
    - Gen 22:8 Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.
    - Gen 22:9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.
    - Gen 22:10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.
    - Gen 22:11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."
    - Gen 22:12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."
- V. 17 – Abraham was, “tested?” How does that idea fit into our idea of what our personal faith journey should look like?
  - Same word, “piradzo,” used in 39 times, 5 other times in Hebrews

- Heb 2:18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.
- Jas 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.
- Jas 1:14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.
- 1Co 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

This next one is surprising, at least to me:

- 2Co 13:5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

We see in this verse the idea of being in the faith (Pistis) and of being tested being combined in one idea by Paul.

- To objectively examine, or prove (as in the veracity)
- You will be tested (at a minimum because you will Examine yourself)

By Faith, The Patriarchs...

Heb 11:20 By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

Heb 11:21 By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

Heb 11:22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

Here we see Faith is “future” oriented. It looks forward.

- Assurance of things hoped for – we don’t hope for what we have  
Heb 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- Rewards those who seek Him, a future event.  
Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
- Abraham looking forward – “longing for Home,” as Timothy shared about last week.  
Heb 11:10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

We see the author not spending a great deal of time on any of those mentioned, yet orienting the reader’s mind toward a faith that is sure of God keeping his promises. Their faith motivated action that was consistent with the firm expectation of a future fulfillment of a promise. Even a promise that would be fulfilled as they, “died in faith.” Each of these Patriarchs blessed when near the end of their life, realizing they were going to die in faith, having not received the promise.

The challenge the Hebrews readers felt growing inside of them was the challenge that asked if God still kept his promises? What did they think about the promises of God in the midst of demanding persecution that they were faced with?

The challenge for us today is much the same.

By faith Moses

Heb 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

Heb 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

Heb 11:25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Heb 11:26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Heb 11:27 By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Heb 11:28 By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

- The Beautiful Child
  - Wow, he is good looking, let's hide him?
  - Not ordinary, something different
- What did Moses give up, by faith?
  - A Royal Inheritance (rejected being the Son of Pharaoh's daughter)
  - Opulent treatment – he chose mistreatment instead
  - "Pleasures of Sin"
  - Homeland in Egypt
- Reproach of Christ
  - Likely meaning the author is seeing OT stories in the light of their typological fulfillment in the NT. "Historical Verisimilitude" gives way to a sense of the wholeness and continuity of the people of God."
  - How do we do with the social stigma of being involved with a minority movement?
    - Life was harder
    - Social status was lost
    - Worldly security was lost
  - "Greater wealth"
    - Compare this to:  
1Pe 1:6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,  
1Pe 1:7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

How do we understand the value of our faith in the moments of life? Is our faith most precious, such that we compromise nothing else?

- A small lie of convenience
- A second, inappropriate glance
- Things explored on the internet
- Our way
- Being right

How does our faith become, to us, more precious than Gold that perishes. How do we esteem the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt.

By Faith the Israelites

Heb 11:29 By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

Heb 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

- Faith sees no circumstance as impossible, but sees clearly the unseen God.

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Heb 11:27 By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

What circumstance do we face that seems impossible, like there is no way out, like nothing can be done about it? What does God promise, even just what we have looked at today:

- Working for our good
- Will prove/test our faith (which is more precious than gold)
- A way of escape
- And we haven't even gotten to the Trump Card yet!

The normal Christian life is a life that sees the unseen and is moved by the sight.

The red sea looked like an impossible circumstance, like the end of the line.

Jericho looked like an impossible obstacle to overcome.

Faith sees Him who is invisible and acts accordingly, not in accord with circumstance.

By faith Rahab

Heb 11:31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

For all time, even as listed in the hall of faith, she is Rahab the Prostitute. Yet, simultaneously, she is listed as part of the same cloud of witnesses as Abraham, the father of our faith, and Moses.

And we must learn to be patient with the faith of the newly converted. Rahab lied in her act of faith. Jesus did not. Yet her heart was a heart of faith, of seeing the unseen and of being certain for that which she hoped for. She was new in her faith and, like the others and like us, was far from perfect. Yet, her faith move her. She didn't let her present reality dictate her future behavior. Faith gripped her and she moved with the moral conviction and intellectual assent that leads to action.

Even Jesus little brother mentions Rahab:

Jas 2:25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

Amazing action, if imperfect, sprang from proximate faith! Don't let your present reality control your future more than your faith does.

And Rahab lived in Israel, married an Israelite (of the community of faith) and became an ancestor of Jesus Christ:

Mat 1:4 and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,

Mat 1:5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,

Mat 1:6 and Jesse the father of David the king....and Jesus comes from David's lineage.

What is going to happen next in your journey of faith? How does a live motivated by faith change your destiny?

Take the next imperfect step of faith, like Rahab, and know God is working for your good (Rm. 8).

On our Journey today we have seen the context the author of Hebrews has written into and we have been stirred in the presence of real faith. Perhaps challenged, provoked or convicted?

Now, though, we move to the absolute best part, the authors point and the driving purpose of this section of scripture.

We move to The Trump Card!

Remember our bookends, verses 13 and 39. We have this group of people, commended for their faith, the faith that contains the attributes we looked at. They were all motivated forward by this Faith that is certain of what it hopes for and confident of what it does not see.

God's character, God's nature of keeping his promises, drove them all forward.

They made the list in the hall of faith, their faith is famous and inspirational and God elected to use their real-life stories to stir us today forward into a life of faith. Forward in our faith journey together.

Yet, yet, they all died in faith. All of them. Dead having not received the promise.

Their lives point to God's character and God offers their lives to us as part of this cloud of witnesses to draw us forward in our faith journey's.

But let's ask again.....

What if I die in faith, having not receive the promises?

Have we seen enough to drive us forward in faith? Do we have a compelling future vision, an eye of faith that sees the unseen and that drives us forward, counting the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the figurative treasures of Egypt?

On your personal journey of faith, irrespective of where you are on it, what's next? What has the Holy Spirit been bringing to your mind, as he illuminates scripture to you, that represents the physical, real world, expression of your faith in action?

Think of it now. Consider it. What if you did it? And what if, having done it, you die in faith?

You might feel a lot like the people we have looked at today. They did it, they moved forward, imperfectly, in their faith. Then they died in their faith, having not received the promises.

Feel the emotion of that type of life. Of a life yielded to the authority of Jesus, yielded to the Word, and lived motivated by faith.

And then dying.

And Jesus has not returned and you are dead, in your faith.

It's not so bad. In fact, it is not bad at all. You are amazing, astonished and stunned at the beauty of being in the presence of Jesus in paradise, aren't you?

But there is more...God offers a motivation like no other on earth or in heaven.

This is faith's trump card, the trump card over dying in faith and the motivation for living in faith. It is summed up in just a few verses and said like this:

**1Th 4:15** For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

1Th 4:17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

1Th 4:18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Even dying in faith is a privileged position in the Glorious Kingdom of God.

ARE YOU ENCOURAGED?

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, The Israelites, Rahab

And get this....

ME!! Unbelievable

YOU!

VENTURA

THE CHURCH

All united and scream together the glorious testimony of being a cloud of witness, looking until Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith!!

Glory to Jesus, Glory to Jesus, Glory to Jesus!!

It's all about Him.