

*~ Faith Without Borders ~  
A Continuity in the Discontinuity*

*Cross-Covenantal Faith:  
including Old Covenant Faith  
for New Covenant Believers*

**Hebrews 11**

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**Introduction: Into Hebrews**

**1. The uniqueness of Hebrews in the Scriptures — What distinguishes this book from all others?**

This is a book that resists being placed in a box. It does not fit the mold so many other Biblical books do. It is not easily categorized. There is much about this book that is unique. Perhaps we can agree that there would be a void in the Canon without it.

## 2. The *raison d'être* for Hebrews in the Canon — Why is this book in our Bibles?

The focus throughout the book of Hebrews is on Christ.

CH	Doctrine	Focus	Better/Greater than:
1	Revelation	Christ the Son of God	the prophets and the angels
2	Incarnation	Christ the Son of Man	man
3–4	Salvation	Christ the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ the Builder of our House	Moses
5–7	Intercession	Christ the Great High Priest	Aaron, Levi, and Abraham
8–10	Mediation	Christ the New Covenant Sacrifice	the entire Old Covenant
12	Mediation 2	Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant	the fathers of our flesh Abel
13	Sanctification	Christ the Great Shepherd	the tabernacle

The theme of Hebrews calling those on the brink of apostasy back to perseverance may well be encapsulated in the opening verses of chapter 12:

“...let us run with patience the race that is set before us,  
Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”

It is not a stretch to see this not only as the grand theme of Hebrews, but as the key to the perseverance of the elect in faith.

***Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith***

## **Body: Into Hebrews 11**

### **1. Hebrews 11 cannot be fully appreciated unless it is seen as the link between Hebrews 10 and 12**

We must contemplate the place of Hebrews 11, the great “Faith Chapter” of the Bible, in the author’s development, and in the entirety of the Scriptures (along with the “Love chapter,” the “Hope chapter,” the “Resurrection chapter,” etc.). In order to do that we must first connect this chapter to what goes before, and to what follows it in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews takes us for a ride! In the rear view mirror is Jesus the author of our faith!  
In the windshield is Jesus as the finisher of our faith.  
Every now and then He puts the brakes on (chs. 5, 6, and 10)!

Hebrews 1–10 — How is Jesus the author our faith? How did Jesus author our faith?  
Hebrews 11 — How did Jesus’s authorship of faith function for the great cloud of witnesses?

Ch. 11 — How did Jesus finish their faith?  
Ch. 12 — How does Jesus finish our faith?

Chapter 11 of Hebrews is the final preparation for what we face in chapter 12, which is what we face in this life prior to glorification.

The focus is on “their faith” and “our faith” that Jesus is the author and finisher of.

### **2. The Continuity in all of the Discontinuity**

This is the “Continuity in all of the Discontinuity.” Our consideration of that reality must include a confession of the legitimacy of both continuity and discontinuity and the dangers of extremes in both. Notice what this chapter does to help us avoid those extremes.

### **3. Faith Without Borders**

Here in Hebrews 11 is “Faith Without Borders”<sup>1</sup> — not just geographical, but historical/temporal, and covenantal — covenant mediators and recipients are included, and indeed emphasized, but the ground this chapter covers is not limited to them.

### **4. A Biblical Theology of Faith**

Hebrews 11 is in the rear view mirror looking all the way back into the misty distance of history, but it begins and ends with a look through the windshield!

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<sup>1</sup> *Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)* at <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/> [accessed 11 AUG 2022].

What we are confronted with in Hebrews 11 is a Biblical Theology of faith from creation to new creation. This is found between the chiasmic verses that “sandwich” it.

Compare verses 11:1 to 11:40, and 11:2 to 11:39.

11:1 — Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

11:40 — God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

11:2 — For by it the elders obtained a good report.

11:39 — And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

For an excellent recent treatment of Biblical faith and its relationship to Biblical hope see: John Piper, “What’s the Difference Between Faith and Hope?” (19 AUG 2022), on *desiring God* at <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/whats-the-difference-between-faith-and-hope> [accessed 20 AUG 2022].

Inserted within the first 16 verses between these introductory and concluding statements are the following developments of these themes:

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.

11:13–16 — <sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. <sup>15</sup> And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. <sup>16</sup> But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

## **5. The Faith Heritage of New Covenant Believers**

Here in Hebrews 11 is the faith heritage of New Covenant believers. In one sense, Hebrews 11 is a diversion in the progression found in the book. The focus has been on Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith. In this chapter we are not focused directly on Him, but on many others. In this the chapter may be seen as a diversion, a necessary one, but a diversion nevertheless. Here we see what Jesus has done for others and their faith. These others are the faithful, those who were faithful to the end, those who have fought the good fight, and finished their course.

## **6. Cross-Covenantal Faith**

What we find in Hebrews 11 may be referred to as “cross-covenantal faith.”

This is about Old Covenant faith for New Covenant believers, but it is more than that. The faith exemplified throughout this “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1) transcends that covenant.

It is hardly debatable that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (11:4–22) were not included under the Old Covenant. Among these are found covenantal heads that preceded the Old or Mosaic Covenant (the Noahic and Abrahamic Covenants), yet it is not certain that is the case with the first two, Abel and Enoch, or Sara. Neither can the vast majority of those whose faith is described in this “great cloud of witnesses” following the descriptions of Moses’ faith be seen as covenantal mediators: Moses’ parents, the people of Israel, Rahab, Gedeon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, Samuel, the prophets, and many others who are nameless in this chapter.

What this chapter in God’s inspired Word confronts us with includes all of the historical periods covered by the Biblical covenants, and transcends any and all of the individual Biblical covenants, including the Sinaitic/Mosaic or Old Covenant. If this is not recognized then the application of this chapter to our own perseverance cannot be made. There must not be a disconnect here.

“Old Testament examples are New Testament instructions.”  
— John Owen<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Posted by *Banner of Truth* 31 MAY 2022 on *Facebook* at <https://www.facebook.com/TheBannerofTruth/photos/a.87709306975/10158513521956976> [accessed 6 JUN 2022].

**Table: *The Faith of the Great Cloud of Witnesses***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Verses</b>	<b>Positives</b>	<b>Negatives — Rejected or Endured</b>	<b>Reason — Good Report</b>
Abel	4	offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice	than Cain	by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh
Enoch	5	was translated	that he should not see death; and was not found	because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God
Noah	7	prepared an ark to the saving of his house	being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear,....by the which he condemned the world	became heir of the righteousness which is by faith
Abraham	8	when he was called to go out....obeyed; and he went out	not knowing whither he went	into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance
Abraham	9–10	he sojourned in the land of promise....with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:	as <i>in</i> a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles	For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker <i>is</i> God
Sara	11–12	received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child	when she was past age	because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, <i>so many</i> as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable

Name	Verses	Positives	Negatives — Rejected or Endured	Reason — Good Report
Abraham	17–19	offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten <i>son</i> , Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called	when he was tried...Accounting that God <i>was</i> able to raise <i>him</i> up, even from the dead	from whence also he received him in a figure
Isaac	20	blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come		
Jacob	21	blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, <i>leaning</i> upon the top of his staff	when he was a dying	
Joseph	22	made mention of the departing of the children of Israel	when he died...and gave commandment concerning his bones	
Moses' parents	23	when he was born, was hid three months of his parents		because they saw <i>he was</i> a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment
Moses	24–26	when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter	Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season	Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward
Moses	27	he forsook Egypt	not fearing the wrath of the king	for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible

<b>Name</b>	<b>Verses</b>	<b>Positives</b>	<b>Negatives — Rejected or Endured</b>	<b>Reason — Good Report</b>
Moses	28	he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood		lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them
(Israel)	29	they passed through the Red sea as by dry <i>land</i> :	which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned	
(Israel)	30	the walls of Jericho fell down		after they were compassed about seven days
Rahab	31	perished not with them that believed not		when she had received the spies with peace
Gedeon Barak Samson Jephthae David Samuel prophets		subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises	stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens	
Women	35a			received their dead raised to life again
Others	35b–d		were tortured, not accepting deliverance	that they might obtain a better resurrection
Others	36–38		had trial of <i>cruel</i> mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts, and <i>in</i> mountains, and <i>in</i> dens and caves of the earth	(Of whom the world was not worthy:)



What is New Covenant faith?

It is no different in its essence than Old Covenant faith, or pre-Old Covenant faith!

What does New Covenant faith do?

New Covenant faith does precisely the same as Old Covenant faith and pre-Old Covenant faith!

What does New Covenant faith look like in action, in a life?

New Covenant faith looks exactly like Old Covenant faith and pre-Old Covenant faith!

What does New Covenant faith not do?

New Covenant faith will not do whatever Old Covenant faith and pre-Old Covenant faith would not do!

## **Conclusion:**

### **The Theological Implications of the Cross-Cultural Faith in Hebrews 11**

#### **1) Doctrine:**

Calvinists can be counted on to enter the debate about regeneration and faith on the side of the egg preceding the chicken, i.e. regeneration must necessarily precede faith.

#### **2) Problem:**

Calvinists are often found to be quite inconsistent when it comes to regeneration prior to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. Some Calvinists even insist dogmatically that there was no regeneration in the Old Testament, under the Old Covenant, or otherwise.

#### **3) Question:**

Granting that insistence for the sake of argument, the question begged by Hebrews 11 is: “Whence cometh the faith of this great cloud of witnesses?”

The mantra: “No regeneration — no faith,” in other words, that the presence of true faith presupposes regeneration, simply will not stand the scrutiny of this chapter while denying regeneration to the Old Testament saints.

“Whence cometh the faith of this great cloud of witnesses if there was no regeneration prior to Pentecost and they therefore are not regenerate?”

#### **4) Conclusion:**

Any theology that posits a discontinuity between the faith of those cataloged in Hebrews 11 and our faith under the New Covenant must be seen as flawed.

*Sola Scriptura, Solo Christo, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Soli Deo Gloria,*

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Resources available in file titled, “Select Bibliography on *Hebrews* - for the All Things New Conference 22-25 August 2022”