

Faith Series
Part 2
“How Faith Works”

Heb 11:13 “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Last week I spoke on the definition of faith out of the well-known verse,

“Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not yet seen” (Heb. 11:1).

- We saw that faith believes what you cannot see....**
- It is not moved by circumstances or feelings.**
- And that, just because something is invisible, doesn’t mean it’s not real.**

Now this time I want to talk about “how faith works.”

Now, when we read the famous faith chapter, also called the ‘hall of faith’ of Hebrews 11, we find a list of 16 Old Testament saints who lived and walked by faith.

For instance:

In the story of Abel we see faith worshipping—Abel offered to God an acceptable sacrifice.

In the story of Enoch we see faith walking—Enoch “walked with God” and God took him.

In the story of Noah we see faith working—“moved with godly fear, he built the ark.”

How faith WORSHIPS, how faith WALKS, and how faith WORKS are some of the nuggets about faith found in chapter 11.

And we’re also told twice in chapter 11 that none of these 16 saints received the ultimate promise they were believing for when they died—that promise being the arrival of Messiah to the earth, the coming of our Redeemer, Jesus.

This is primarily what the faith focus of their lives was—the coming of God’s Messiah, the Savior of the world.

For instance, Jesus told the Pharisees, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56).

It says that Abraham and the other OT saints SAW the promise of a coming Messiah, EMBRACED the promise, and CONFESSED the promise, yet they died in faith not having received the promise in their lifetime.

Now, for the record, they didn't die in vain!

When Jesus died and rose from the dead, the Bible records,

“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matt. 27:51-52).

The saints that came out of their graves were the OT saints who had died in faith— —and were now receiving the fulfillment of the promise they had SEEN, WELCOMED, and CONFESSED!

Now, these 3 words—SAW, EMBRACED, AND CONFESSED—describe exactly how faith works,

how it presents itself,

we might say how faith BEHAVES.

In that lag time between the PROMISE and the PROVISION, the REQUEST and the ANSWER—Faith SEES what isn't yet there,

WELCOMES what hasn't yet arrived,

and CONFESSES what hasn't yet been fulfilled.

Let me take these one at a time...FIRST:

I. Faith sees what isn't there yet

We talked about this last time, but let me add a couple of things more...

Let's look again at what Jesus said about Abraham, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).

The Greek word for "SAW" here means "to see with the mind, to spiritually see, to perceive with inward spiritual perception"...

It's telling us that Abraham didn't see something with his physical eyes, but he saw with the "eye of faith."

He spiritually saw that one day, God would send a Redeemer to the world, and this is what he died in faith believing for!

He saw it so clearly with the prophetic eye of faith that he was able to actually rejoice in it!

Another example is Noah...It says, “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household...” (11:7)

Noah didn’t see the Great Flood with his natural eyes, but with the eye of faith, activated by God’s word, he clearly envisioned the terrible Great Flood that was coming.

It was as real to him as if the rain were already falling on his head!

And moved with godly fear, he acted on what he envisioned over 100 years before it happened!

This is how Bible faith works...It sees things God has for your future—not just heaven, but things in your lifetime that God intends to bring to pass.

When you have faith for something you will also have a vision for it, you will picture it, it fires up and ignites your imagination!

This is how Elijah could say, “I hear the sound of an abundance of rain” when in the natural he saw only blue skies!

This is how the OT saints could “see afar off” the city God was preparing for them in heaven when as yet they weren’t occupying it!

ILLUS: When I was still a teenager, God filled my heart with a burning faith that I would reach multitudes with the gospel.

I SAW in my minds eye great crowds of people listening to the Word as I preached.

It wasn't an ego trip, or some wild fantasy, it was just what God put in my heart, and it has now come true—and more so with each passing day.

We are now daily reaching tens of thousands of people around the world with the Word of God.

While still a teenager, I SAW it and it set my heart on fire!

QUESTION: Do you have a vision today, something you see with the eye of faith that hasn't yet appeared but, by faith, you believe it will?

Your “Faith is the guarantee of what you're hoping for, the proof of what you don't yet see!” (Heb. 11:1)

And I also experienced what comes next...

II. Faith EMBRACES what it believes...

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, and embraced them...”

The word *embraced* is a word that refers to the Bible custom of drawing a person close to yourself by grabbing their hand and pulling them in for a hug.

So the picture here is one of grabbing hold of the promises of God and pulling them close to your heart!

For instance, after Mary had been told so many wonderful things about her baby boy Jesus, it says, “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart...” (Lk. 2:19)

She pulled the incredible promises of God in close, and welcomed them into the chambers of her soul.

And she watched over and guarded them lest the thief of doubt or unbelief steal them from her.

This is how these OT saints died—not in doubt or unbelief—but in FAITH, holding the promises of God close!

What promises of God are you holding tightly today with a welcome embrace, even before they’re fulfilled?

Faith SEES it before it’s there, WELCOMES it before it arrives, and finally, Faith:

III. Confesses the promises with the mouth

It says they “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

The word “confess” here means “*to voice the same conclusion, to agree with.*”

They weren’t bringing the promises to pass by confessing them, they were simply coming into agreement with them.

What you say with your mouth always reveals what you believe in your heart.

They confessed they were strangers on earth, confessed a better world was coming, confessed that a coming Redeemer would make all this possible!

Faith SEES what isn’t yet there, HOLDS TIGHT to what hasn’t yet arrived, and CONFESSES what is yet to come.

These 3 things are what keep you till the answer arrives!