

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

The author has already stated that the just shall live by faith. It is only by faith that they can persevere and continue in their Christian calling. It is faith that will produce an unwavering confidence in God, a confidence not shaken by trials and temptations. The author was convinced that the readers possessed such faith, for they had demonstrated it in the past. He had called this fact to remembrance to provoke them to hold fast to their beliefs in their current situation.

Faith enables one to be convinced of things which have not yet taken place. It is what gives reality to things which cannot be seen or completely understood. Just as the five senses put the body in touch with physical reality, so faith is what puts one in touch with spiritual reality for which the senses are useless. Faith might be termed a 'sixth sense'. Faith is belief, but belief in things which we can't physically experience or fully understand. Hope is a product of faith.

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

Rom. 8:24-25

Faith is not trust in the unknown. On the contrary, it is the means by which we can know those things which we cannot see. The things hoped for of which the believer can be convinced of by faith are the resurrection from the dead, eternal life, and the glories of heaven. The things not seen which through faith we can be assured of are God himself and his spiritual realm.

Faith is a gift from God. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Faith is acting in accordance with belief in the word of God. Although this chapter begins with the words 'faith is', it does not define faith but rather describes it. This entire chapter describes faith and gives many examples of faith but faith's definition is elusive.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

I Peter 1:8-9

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

By displaying unwavering confidence in God whom they could not see, and motivated by belief in promises they had not obtained, the elders gained God's approval. The elders were the Jewish patriarchs of which every Jew was familiar. They were the champions of the Jewish religion which were given their place in the scriptures by faith. These Hebrew readers could take their place among their ancestors by displaying the same faith. Lineage, upon which the Jews placed great importance, was of no use. Faith is what would sustain them and gain them God's approval.

"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

Gal. 3:6-7

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."

The readers, as Jews, believed that God created the universe. The author wants them to see this faith he has been describing in themselves, for the belief that God created the universe can only be by faith. The belief in creation provides the perfect example of faith. No one was there, no one witnessed it, the event cannot be reconstructed or duplicated in any way, but those who believe do it solely on God's word.

By faith the relationship between creator and creation is understood. The universe came into being by the mere word of God. A thought completely foreign to our physical being, namely getting something from nothing, is unquestioningly believed.

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathered the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him."

Psalms 33:6-8

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof?"

Job 38:4-6

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the

darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." Gen. 1:3-6

Creation in turn points to the creator. Paul tells us we can 'see' God in his creation. He has shown himself in his creation so man is without excuse.

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so as they are without excuse." Rom. 1:19-20

The author had already given them a negative example in the faithless Israelites (Heb 3:15-19). He also reminded them of the faith which they once displayed (Heb. 10:32). With this verse he shows the readers faith is present within them, and now will present great examples of faith by which they can be strengthened.

11:4 - "By faith Able 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."

Able, the son of Adam, is the first person mentioned by the author in presenting examples of faith. By faith he offered a sacrifice acceptable to God and was declared righteous. The story of Cain and Able contrasts faith and unbelief. They both had the same knowledge of God. Able's faith brought him to a righteous standing, while Cain's disobedience brought destruction (Gen. 4:1-7). What made Able different than Cain was faith. The reference to 'Able being dead yet speaking' may be a reference to Gen. 4:10 where God says the blood of Able cried out to him. By his faith, the example of Able, as recorded in the scriptures, speaks to all throughout the generations. Christ himself used Able as an example of righteousness as well as did the author of this letter.

"That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Able unto the blood of Zacharia's son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." Matt. 23:35

In studying the Levitical system it was seen that God reveals in great detail to man the manner in which he desires to be worshipped. All true worship in the old testament needed to point to Christ to be of any value. The wording in

Gal. 4:3, as well as the fact that Cain and Able offered sacrifice at the same time shows that God had setup a system of worship of which the bible is silent. Able offered a blood sacrifice and it is revealed in the scriptures that only by the shedding of blood can sin be dealt with. As further proof of a designated form of worship, Cain knew what he needed to do, he came to worship God, but thought he could approach God the way he wanted.

11:5 - "By faith Enoch 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."

The second example of faith given is that of Enoch. Enoch, the great grandfather of Noah, did not die but was taken to heaven by God, because of his faith. Enoch was a prophet of God in a time of great evil. By faith he maintained a special relationship with God throughout his life.

"And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not, for God took him."
Gen. 5:21-24

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Jude 1:14-15

Elijah was the only other person recorded who did not experience death.

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

II Kings 2:11

Those who are alive at the end of time will also be translated in the same manner.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

I Cor. 15:51-52

" For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord him self shall

descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
I Thes. 4:15-16

This shows the all sufficiency of the blood of Christ. It was applied to the faithful of the old testament as well as the new. It completely deals with the stain of sin and the corruptness of human nature. Those in Christ are totally acceptable to God even in their human state. (Heb. 8:12, II Cor. 12:2)

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."

It is impossible to please God apart from faith, because only by faith can one know God exists, and only by faith can one know God cares, desiring to enter into a relationship with man. God cannot be known by sight and God cannot be comprehended so as to know him by reason.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him."
John 1:18

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"
Rom. 11:33-34

Equally as important as the belief that he exists is the belief that he can be approached. Faith is required to know God will respond favorably. The idea is not that our motivation for seeking him is reward, but we seek him because by faith we know it is what he desires as he draws us to himself. By faith we seek God, by faith those who are called know this is what he desires.

"And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee: but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."
1 Chron. 28:9

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."
Jer. 29:13

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
Matt. 6:33

11:7 - "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

The next example of faith given by the author is that of Noah. God spoke to Noah and Noah in turn put unwavering confidence in the word of God. Noah built an ark of mammoth proportions, on dry land, over a period of at the most 120 years. God declared he would destroy man in 120 years. "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." (Gen. 6:3) Noah was 500 years old around the time his sons were born, "And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth." (Gen. 5:32), and 600 years old when the flood occurred. "And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth." (Gen. 7:6). If Noah was given the full 120 years to build the ark, his sons were not yet even born and Gen. 6:18, "But with thee I will establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.", becomes a prophecy of God. Lamech, Noah's father died five years before the flood and Methuselah, Noah's grandfather died the year of the flood.

The bible does not provide any detail of the years before the flood, but we know that Noah was not silent. He was a preacher of righteousness, and his faith and belief in the word of God condemned the world.

"And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;" II Peter 2:5

Noah, having a reverence and fear of God, believed and persevered. He accomplished the will of God and received the promise, becoming an heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Heb. 10:36).

11:8 - "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

The author next presents the example of Abraham, who like Noah simply heard the word of God and put supreme confidence in it. Abraham was called by God to leave everything he knew and to go and dwell in a faraway land that he knew nothing about (Gen 12:1-5). By faith he obeyed God, and journeyed to the land God promised he would receive as an inheritance.

Abraham was indeed a man of great faith, but the story of Abraham presents a man growing and maturing in the faith. In a few instances he tried to 'help God out' through his own strength and intellect. On more than one occasion he gave his wife over to the ruler of the country he was passing through in fear of his life. He also had a son by his wife's maid thinking in his own wisdom that the promise might be fulfilled in this way.

Everyone who comes to Christ has the same calling as Abraham. The believer is called to forsake family, careers, possessions, or anything that would get in the way of his relationship with Jesus Christ. The believer must deny himself (Mark 1:16-21, Phil 3:5-8).

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall they be of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Matt. 10:34-39

"And he said to another, Follow me. But he said, Lord suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:59-62

The day we were saved we accepted a calling we knew little about. We believed God, accepting the salvation he offered. Like Abraham we are to grow and mature in the faith.

11:9 - "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:"

Abraham went to the land of promise and dwelt there. He dwelt there in faith, for upon his arrival and throughout his lifetime he was not a possessor, but simply another inhabitant of that land. He lived in tents moving from place to place. He possessed the same rights as any other stranger in the land. The only land he owned was the land he purchased to bury his dead. Abraham continued in faith as did Isaac and Jacob who came after him. The land remained a promise which they possessed only by faith (Acts 7:2-7).

We have seen Noah given a 120 year project and Abraham living as a stranger in a land which he owned. Faith is characterized by patience.

11:10 - "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Abraham remained faithful by looking beyond the inheritance of the land to the permanent dwelling he would have in heaven. Being convinced of this heavenly dwelling and looking to it strengthened him and provided patience to live the nomadic existence he was called to. (See Hebrews, MacArthur pp. 331)

11:11 - "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."

The old testament accounts of Sarah do not present a woman of faith, however it is recorded here that by faith, whether hers or Abraham's, she finally conceived. It was Sarah who conceived the plan of Abraham having a child by Hagar her maid (Gen. 16:1-4). When the promise of Sarah having a child was reported, she laughed (Gen. 18:12-15). Sarah at some point grew in faith and the promise was fulfilled, even though she was past age and barren her whole life (Gen. 21:1-8).

11:12 - "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."

In due time the promise of Abraham was fulfilled in that from his loins was a nation born, which came to inherit the promised land. That Abraham would have a son and become the father of a nation became more and more improbable as time elapsed. At his advanced age, as well as the age of Sarah, not to mention the fact that she was barren. According to human reasoning there was a better chance of a dead man having a son. Standing against all human probabilities was Abraham's faith.

"(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully

persuaded, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

Rom. 4:17-22

Abraham was called by God when he was approximately 60 years old. After 26 years of believing, at the age of 86, he takes matters into his own hands and has a son by Hagar. Thirteen years later, at age 99, he is told Sarah will have a son (Gen. 17:15-23).

11:13 - "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."

Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob all died not seeing the fulfillment of the promises. They knew it would take generations to grow into a mighty nation. They knew they were at the beginning-end of the promise, but died being as sure of its fulfillment as if it had happened in their lifetime. They held onto these promises and were strengthened by them, and were motivated by the fact that they knew they were strangers not only in the land but upon the earth.

11:14-15 - "For they say that such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned."

The fact that they saw themselves as pilgrims and never took the opportunity to go back to their homes proved they were seeking something better. Their wanderings in Canaan were voluntary. They preferred it to their own home despite the hardships and trials, because by faith they pursued the promises of God.

The 'country' from which every believer was called out is his old way of life. He can go back to it anytime the opportunity presents itself. His 'old country' would welcome him back at any time, but the true believer has no desire to return. He prefers being a stranger on the earth while he lives out his life seeking a new country, seeking the kingdom of God and righteousness. By faith he perseveres with his eyes fixed upon the new heaven and the new earth.

11:16 - "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."

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew they would not, in themselves, possess the land of Canaan, but again, gained their strength from the expectation of a heavenly dwelling. These patriarchs made no plans, did not gather an army, or made any attempt whatsoever to even gain a foothold in this their land. These men were not ignorant of salvation, they practiced blood sacrifices. They knew the forming of this great nation was a part of something bigger through which all nations of the earth would be blessed. They looked for a relationship with God and to be righteous in his eyes.

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." John 8:56

"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Gal. 3:8

By their desire and belief which sprang up from faith, they were pleasing to God. God is faithful and their expectation of a permanent dwelling has been met. By faith they pleased God. Because of their faith God identified himself with them.

"Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Ex. 3:6

11:17-19 - "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises had offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he was received him in a figure."

The supreme test of Abraham's faith came about when God told him to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham was told by God and believed, that Isaac was the son of promise through whom the promise was to be ultimately fulfilled. The command to sacrifice Isaac was therefore beyond all human reasoning. Abraham could not have understood the command, and he could not have known the purpose of it. He offered Isaac to God contrary to human reasoning. By faith he believed God would raise Isaac from the dead, something unheard of, yet the only seeming solution to Abraham (Gen. 22:1-13).

From the time he received the command, in the eyes of Abraham, Isaac was dead. He put himself and his son completely in the hands of God believing God would raise him from the dead. When God gave him back to Abraham,

figuratively speaking, Abraham did receive him back from the dead.

This whole incident becomes a shadow of what would take place with Jesus Christ. The father sacrificing his only son, the fact that the true sacrifice was provided by God, and that Abraham believed his dead son would be resurrected. Some even try to prove that Mt. Moriah was Calvary.

11:20 - "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

Isaac was also a man of faith. He has already been presented as a fellow heir (11:9), and as one who lived in the land and died there embracing the promises (11:13). God also spoke to Isaac directly, repeating the promises to him.

"And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down unto Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and I will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."
Gen. 26:2-4

Just as Abraham had passed on the blessing to him, Isaac by faith pronounced the same blessing upon Jacob according to the promise.

"And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down unto thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."
Gen. 27:27-29

"And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham."
Gen. 28:3-4

It was by faith that he pronounced the blessing of inheritance upon Jacob who was not the first born. Even though he was deceived, he let the initial blessing stand and later pronounced the blessing of inheritance upon Jacob.

"And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy

firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed." Gen. 27:32-33

A blessing was also pronounced upon Esau concerning him and his descendants. Although Isaac preferred Esau, he pronounced upon him the lesser blessing. He accepted God's will by faith, manifesting his acceptance in pronouncing the blessings.

"And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be in the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shall serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." Gen. 27:38-40

Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. Isaac had to be aware of this fact thru his wife as well as through his sons. Isaac nevertheless intended to give the blessing to Esau. Once the blessing was pronounced it seemed to sink in that God wanted the blessing upon Jacob. Isaac never doubted the promises. He wavered at carrying out God's will at times, but eventually pronounced the blessing in faith.

"And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." Gen. 25:22-23

11:21: - "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

God also revealed his will to Jacob and by faith the blessings were pronounced upon the sons of Joseph. In this example human rules and reasoning once again did not prevail. Jacob did not pronounce the patriarchal blessing upon any of his sons, but upon two of his grandsons.

"And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. And now my two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and

Simeon, they shall be mine. And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of thy brethern in their inheritance."

Gen. 48:3-6

The younger received the greater blessing against the will of Joseph their father.

"And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, I thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh."

Gen. 48:18-20

In all of these instances we see God's will revealed. It is carried out by faith, for in most instances it is against the rules of human reasoning or the opposite of the wishes of those involved. When they finally act in accordance with his will it is therefore by faith, by belief in God. Even when Jacob was dying he worshipped God, being sure of the promises as well as his eternal dwelling in heaven. He requested burial in the promised land.

"And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burryingplace. And he said, I will do as thou hast said."

Gen. 47:29-30

11:22 - "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."

The story of Joseph provides a great illustration of a life of faith. At the age of 17 he was sold to merchants by his jealous brothers and was reared in Egypt. He remained faithful to the God of his fathers while living in a pagan culture. The author however, gives no detail of Joseph's life, but in accordance with what has become his theme, concentrates on Joseph's belief in the promise.

At the end of his life, Joseph spoke to his brothers about the exodus out of Egypt and into the promised land. By faith he knew this event would take place and commanded that his remains make the journey and be buried in the land which was still a promise.

"And Joseph said unto his brethern, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry my bones from hence."
Gen. 50:24-25

"And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you."
Ex. 13:19

11:23 - "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment."

Moses, who was the second most important old testament figure to the Jew, ranking only behind Abraham, is the next example of faith discussed by the author. Alarmed by the increasing Hebrew population in Egypt, the Pharaoh ordered all male babies to be thrown into the Nile. It was by faith that the parents of Moses defied this order and hid him for three months (Ex. 2:2-10).

The language 'he was a proper child' or a 'goodly child' infers that the parents knew he was special. They obeyed by faith, what was communicated to them and put the life of the child as well as their own lives into God's hands.

11:24 - "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;"

Moses was raised as the son of the Pharaoh's daughter. He had great wealth, learning, and fame. He also was aware of the fact that he was Hebrew and knew the beliefs and promises of his true people. It is not told how it was communicated to him, but Moses knew he was to be God's instrument in delivering his people. It was faith which enabled him to make the decision to turn his back on everything Egypt had to offer, to forsake his wealth, knowledge, and fame (Acts 7:20-29).

11:25 - "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;"

Being raised as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses knew the full power and might of the nation of Egypt. Choosing the course he did was insane by human reasoning. He had the perfect compromise. Why not use his power and influence politically to help his people. Just as the patriarchs before him, he chose the way of God by faith, over the ways of the world.

11:26- "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

The author makes the story come alive to the readers by calling the trials of Moses the reproach of Christ. Whenever a man follows the ways of God as opposed to the ways of the world he can expect harsh treatment. Moses suffered what would be called at the time this letter was written, the reproach of Christ. Moses actually preferred or thought more highly of suffering for the cause of God than he did the things of Egypt or the world.

"A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."

Psalm 37:16

His actions showed he had faith in something far better than what the world had to offer. Moses acted in a way in which the writer has exhorted his readers to act (Heb. 10:34-36).

Moses knew he was to deliver the people. He killed an Egyptian hoping they would see him as the deliverer. Again it was to be God's way and in God's time. God's time was 40 years later.

11:27 -"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

Moses returned to Egypt when he was about 80 years old and led the Israelites out of bondage. Forty years earlier he left Egypt fearing for his life. The second time he left as the leader of God's people. By faith he did not fear Pharaoh or any other earthly power.

"And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well."

Ex. 2:14-15

"And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more: for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more."

Ex. 10:28-29

"And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said."

Ex. 12:31

11:28 - "Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroy the firstborn should touch them."

God gave Moses, and through him the Israelites, the instructions for what would come to be known as the Passover. They could not have known the significance to the symbolism, but by faith simply heard the instruction of God and obeyed.

Partaking of the Passover meal and the sprinkling of blood upon the doorposts was an act of faith. It showed they believed God and accepted the provision he had provided. The Passover was a shadow of Christ just as much as the Levitical sacrifices. Christ as the unblemished lamb, partaking in Christ as our provision, judgment being passed over because of his blood being applied to our account, as well as its ties to the Lord's Supper, were things Moses could not see and yet by faith was made a part of.

11:29 - "By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned."

The general faithlessness of the Israelites was discussed in chapter 3 of this letter. They displayed faith however, when the power of God was manifested before their eyes when the Red Sea was parted. They knew only God could have accomplished this and put their lives in the hand of God when they stepped onto the dry sea bed. The Egyptians also stepped into the sea, but it was not faith but blindness. Their hearts were hardened by God. They could not see the power of God, but plunged headlong into destruction.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

Ex. 14:15-18

Most of the world today is like the Egyptians. The manifestations of God are all around them, but they fail to see. They don't even stop and think, but pursue their madness, completely oblivious to spiritual things. They do not see because they don't have faith (Heb. 11:6). How many professing Christians are like the Israelites. They know Jesus Christ, they see his power, but never commit themselves to him. They pass through the Red Sea only to die later in the wilderness.

"These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest: to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, and latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

II Peter 2:17-22

11:30 - "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

Great faith was exhibited by the generation of Israelites that conquered the promised land. The taking of the city of Jericho is the illustration used by the author to demonstrate their faith. There was nothing in the instructions given by God that according to human reasoning could produce the desired results. Therefore it was by faith that they proceeded and by faith that the walls fell down.

Their faith was manifested in patience, persistence, and perseverance. They marched around the city on seven consecutive days without producing any result. They were probably being ridiculed unmercilessly from those within the city. Then on the seventh day, marching around the city seven times, they received the hope of their faith. (Read Joshua 6:12-20)

In our human state we sometimes think that there is no way a certain individual can be reached. We present the gospel to them and meet only ridicule and contempt. We must be persistent, for the gospel is powerful enough to knock down any stronghold. It is a manifestation of faith when we continue to witness and pray for that 'hopeless case'.

11:31 - "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."

All of the inhabitants of Jericho perished except Rahab and her household, the reason being that she had placed her faith in the true God over everything she had previously known. Rahab was of a pagan culture and of questionable morality, yet she recognized the power of the one true God and believed. (Read Joshua 2:9-13)

Her act of risking her own life to conceal the spies of Israel was a manifestation of her faith. Rahab married Salmon and bore Boaz who was the great grandfather of David. She was an ancestor of Jesus.

11:32 - "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:"

There are many more examples of faith upon which the author could expound. Being satisfied that the examples given have served his purpose, the author mentions other examples in passing. Gideon was a judge and military leader. Following the instructions of God he defeated a great army with only 300 men. His 'weapons' were trumpets and pitchers. Barak assembled a force of 10,000 men and, accompanied by Deborah, defeated an army much superior to his own. Samson was a judge of Israel, his motives were sometimes questionable and he often disobeyed, but he knew that it was the Lord who was the source of his strength, especially at the end of his life.

Jephthae was a judge of Israel who also has some serious blots upon his name. He was a man of faith however and defeated the Ammonites. David was king of Israel and one of the great men of the old testament. There are many examples of faith in David's life, his battle with Goliath stands out. Samuel was a prophet and Israel's last judge. His greatest enemy was his own people, as he spoke against idolatry and immorality. He continued faithful throughout his life.

11:33-34 - "Who through faith 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 aliens."

The readers were very familiar with the men mentioned and of their great deeds. In these verses the author gives a general list, in no particular order, of the things that the men mentioned, as well as others like them, had accomplished through faith. The point is that men accomplished things that were humanly impossible, things beyond human reason. They proceeded against human logic by faith. This list of things accomplished is a manifestation of the faith of these individuals.

The scriptures mention the weakness of many of these men, showing that

what they accomplished was not of themselves, but of God. ("out of weakness was made strong")

11:35 - "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:"

The author continues to document examples of great obstacles which were overcome by faith. Raising the dead is humanly impossible and yet both Elijah and Elisha believed God, raising a dead child and presenting them to their mother. Many were tortured, passing up the opportunity for deliverance, because they would have had to renounce their beliefs. They all had their eyes fixed upon a better deliverance and so endured.

11:36 - "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment."

Those that were faithful to God suffered mentally as well as physically. They were mocked and jeered at because of their message and belief. Unfortunately the worst treatment came from their own people. This was especially true of the prophets of Israel.

"Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord." Jer. 20:2

11:37-38 - "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; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

The prophets were fugitives in their own land. They were God's men among God's people and yet they were wanderers, rejected by the rulers and people alike. The prophet Zechariah was stoned (II Chron. 24:20-22). Many prophets of the Lord were killed by the sword (I Kings 19:10). Jesus even made mention of the fate of the prophets and predicted that his followers would suffer the same fate (Matt. 23:29-35).

Probably even greater than their physical torment was their temptation to quit. No one listened to their message, no one cared, in fact they were even hated for their words. To continue, according to human reasoning, was foolish and futile.

"O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."
 Jer. 20:7-9

Being sawn in half is not mentioned anywhere else in the bible. Jewish tradition holds that Isaiah was sawn in half. These men of faith did not deserve this treatment and the world in turn did not deserve these men. This statement at the same time shows how highly men of faith are looked upon by God as well as how wicked God views the world.

The readers could identify with these examples of the past, for they had suffered the same afflictions and also at the hands of their own people. They were mocked, scourged, and imprisoned. Stephen had been stoned and James killed by the sword. They were now being tempted to compromise their stand or to go back entirely. They must truly identify with these examples of faith, seeing themselves as modern day prophets and possessors of God's truth. They must not abandon their hope in the better resurrection.

11:39-40 - "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

Those mentioned in this chapter received God's approval or God's righteousness by faith. They believed in the righteousness God would provide, and died as convinced of the promise as if it had taken place. They knew they were at the beginning-end of the promise. Some mentioned did not even inherit the land, others mentioned here did, but they all had their eyes on something better, on a heavenly country.

"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."
 I Peter 1:10-12

The readers of this letter had something better. They saw Jesus Christ

who is the fulfillment of the promise. They as well as we, are saved by the righteousness God has provided and not will provide. It is in Jesus Christ that those of the old testament are made perfect or complete, and also in Jesus Christ that the new testament believer finds perfection. Jesus Christ is the link, the one that joins all the faithful together as one. The great men here spoken of were as much dependent upon us as we are dependent upon them.

For an excellent summary on Hebrews chapter 11 see Barnes' Notes on Hebrews pp. 287.