

1. We have now come to one of the most familiar chapters of the Bible.
2. Many believers who find some of the earlier portions of this letter difficult to understand turn to this chapter for help, especially in times of crisis or when their own faith seems weak.
3. It is also important to understand that chapter 11 cannot be taken in isolation. Its teaching builds on what was written in the first part of the letter.
4. It is an extensive presentation (Old Testament saints) to the Hebrews of what it means to have faith and obtain life.
5. The passage begins by explaining the nature and quality of true faith. Earlier passages in the letter have already indicated that not all who began in faith continued in faith.
6. It is important therefore to understand the word 'faith' in the context of this letter.
7. He is defining faith here in relation to two parallel phrases. The characteristics of faith that are important in understanding the message being delivered in the letter.
8. Looking back to the Old Testament saints - they believed God's promises - as distant as they were they placed their faith and trust in them.
9. The word "substance/assurance" in verse 1 deserves careful treatment. It is the Greek word "*hupostasis*", made up of "*stasis*" to stand - and "*hupo*" under. Meaning "that which stands under, a foundation."
10. In other words - this faith is living in a hope that is so real that it gives absolute assurance. It is the firm ground on which we stand - waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise.
11. The next word is "evidence/conviction" carries the same truth a little further. It implies a response.
12. It is an outward manifestation of the inward assurance based on the promise of God. The person of faith lives his belief. It is evident.
13. The believer's life is committed to what their heart and spirit are convinced is truth. (v2-3)
14. The elders or O.T. saints gained approval from God because of their faith. God declared them righteous based on their faith. (Romans 4)
15. The writer has made several references to creation and now returns to this theme in order to emphasize faith's ability to discern God's power in the created order. The letter began with Christ's share in creation (1:2); it now turns to our understanding of it.
16. Only by faith can we accept the statement that the visible came forth from the invisible.
17. The remaining verses of chapter 11 records the truth about some of the O.T. saints.
18. Ordinary people who, by God's grace alone, were enabled to do extraordinary things because they placed their faith and trust in Him.
19. The writer begins by introducing Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. All of these taken from the book of Genesis. (v4-22)

20. The Hebrew believers should renounce the opportunity to go back to any form of Judaism and should live longing for a better country—a heavenly one.
21. In spite of their failures and trials, these men and women believed God and He bore witness to their faith.
22. Abraham received the promise (6:13) and Moses received the law (10:28). (v23-29)
23. The writer passes over the years in the wilderness and continues with the first main difficulty which the Hebrews had to overcome once they reached Canaan - Jericho. (v30-40)
24. He then mentions the faith demonstrated by Rahab the harlot, before a brief reference, by name only, to six characters from the period of the Judges to the anointing of David as king.
25. The faith which is exemplified in these verses is undaunted. Six leading men are mentioned; the first four from the period of the Judges, when faith was at a premium.
26. In those days, instead of obeying God's voice, or honoring a devoted leader, everyone did 'what was right in his own eyes'. It was a period of backsliding and apostasy.
27. The devout minority recalled the stories of God's power in days gone by to bring the people renewed confidence in the God who could deliver them.
28. Yet for the Judges as well as for David after them, faith was not stereotyped. God works as He pleases and uses whom He will.
29. All six men were very different in personality, social circumstances and spiritual opportunity, yet in various ways God used them.
30. He did not press them into an identical mold or demand the same response from each of them.
31. They were not without faults. Gideon was frightened, Barak was hesitant, Samson was flippant, Jephthah was rash, David was sensuous and Samuel was careless.
32. God's servants do not consist solely of outstanding leaders, patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets or martyrs.
33. In the closing verses we see to a large group whose names we may never know, but whose faith will be not only remembered but treasured.
34. In many circumstances their faith inspired heroism. In other times their faith encouraged fortitude. In all cases their faith awaited fulfilment.
35. Rich as it was, all their faith was confined to the limits of the old covenant. They anticipated the fulfilment of God's promise, the fuller revelation in Christ, but they did not witness its realization.
36. They could be made perfect only as Christians are today, that is by Jesus himself and his sacrifice. Perfection or fulfilment would come through a new covenant, by an eternal legacy, made possible because of a better sacrifice.