

Pastoral Exhortation in the Light of Christ's Superiority, Part 3

11.13 – 40

Review

- Overture on the Nature of Faith, 11.1-3
Now **faith** is the assurance of things **hoped** for, the conviction of things **not seen**.
- The Antediluvians, 11.4-7 (Abel, Enoch, Noah)
- The Patriarchal Period, 11.8-22
 - Abraham, Sarah (Isaac, Jacob)

The Patriarchal Period, 11.8-22

Summarizing commentary (13-16)

- a. “these all” probably refer to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob
- b. their faith saw the things not seen of the promises of God, which center not in an earthly land of promise but a heavenly one
- c. therefore (because of their hopeful faith), God, being pleased to be called their God, prepared for them such a city

The Patriarchal Period, 11.8-22

Abraham, part 2 (17-22)

- a. a singular demonstration of faith: the offering of Isaac
- b. Abraham's faith was focused on the promises of God, especially that Isaac was the chosen seed
- c. he received him back as a type

The Patriarchal Period, 11.8-22

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph

a. their faith is illustrated by their confidence of God's action in the future

b. giving the blessings focused on the future

- Isaac and Jacob in the continuation of the chosen seed
- Joseph in the promise of God regarding the return to the land of promise

From the Exodus to Canaan, 11.23-31

Moses (23-28)

1. the faith of his parents
2. his faith in identifying with the people of God
 - a. giving up the pleasures of treasure and advantage
 - b. preferring the reproach of Christ
 - c. this is another example of how AH sees the unity of the people of God, OT and NT

From the Exodus to Canaan, 11.23-31

Moses (23-28)

3. his faith in leaving Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king
 - he endured – seeing him who is unseen:
4. faith in obedience to Passover instructions

From the Exodus to Canaan, 11.23-31

The corporate faith of the Israelites (29-30)

- a. in spite of fear, obeying the command to cross the Red Sea (again, fear was followed by faith)
- b. obeying the unbelievable instructions regarding Jericho

From the Exodus to Canaan, 11.23-31

Rahab (31)

- a. faith in seeing that Yahweh was real and that his promises were certain
- b. identifying with the people of God and turning from her own
- c. identified as the prostitute
- d. saved from death

The Period of the Judges to the Kingdom, 11.32

1. Rhetorical question to move on the illustrations
2. Judges: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah (non-chronological)
3. King: David
4. Bridge: Samuel
5. The prophets

Various Other Examples, 11.33-38

The Exercise of Faith in **Victors**, 11.33-35a

- conquered kingdoms
- shut the mouths of lions
- quenched the power of fire
- escaped the edge of the sword
- from weakness were made strong
- became mighty in war / put foreign armies to flight
- women received their dead by resurrection

The Exercise of Faith in **Victims**, 11.35b-38

- others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection
- others experienced mockings and scourgings
- chains and imprisonment
- they were stoned
- they were sawn in two
- they were tempted
- they were put to death with the sword
- they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated
- wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground

Various Other Examples, 11.33-38

“If those on whom the great light of grace had not yet shone showed such surpassing constancy in bearing their ills, what effect ought the full glory of the gospel to have on us? A tiny spark of light led them to heaven, but now that the Sun of righteousness shines on us, what excuse shall we offer if we still cling to the earth?” – Calvin

The Expectation of Faith, 11.39-40

1. They did not receive what was promised
2. They lived and died believing that not even death would keep them from the promises
3. Explanation



PRACTICAL APPLICATION IN
LIGHT OF THE EXAMPLES,

12.1-29

RUN WITH ENDURANCE, FIXING YOUR EYES ON JESUS, THE PIONEER AND PERFECTER OF FAITH, 12.1-3

having a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us
laying aside every weight and the easily entangling
sin

let us run with endurance the race set before us

fixing our eyes on the of faith Pioneer and Perfector,
Jesus

who for the joy set before him endured the cross,
despising the shame
and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God

CLOUD OF WITNESSES

- are they witnesses in the sense of spectators, i.e., witnesses of us? (the athletic metaphor does suggest this)
- more likely, in the context following Hebrews 11 (“therefore”), they are witnesses to us of the possibilities and reward of a life of faith, offering us encouragement to endure
- “cloud” was a classical expression for “host”

LAYING ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT (ENCUMBRANCE, HINDRANCE)

- in the Greek athletic contests, runners would run (virtually) naked; athletes often maintained a lower body weight to reduce their burden
- that is, the easily-entangling sin
 - the singular indicates sin in general, not so much a 'besetting' sin
 - any sin that would hamper our perseverance

LAYING ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT (ENCUMBRANCE, HINDRANCE)

- there is a variant reading that differs in one letter (*euperispatos* instead of *euperistatos*)
 - this would be “the easily distracting sin,” which fits the context and leads naturally into the clause that introduces verse 2
 - whatever the reading, AH regards sin as a major impediment in the Christian’s spiritual race

EXHORTATION: LET US RUN THROUGH ENDURANCE THE SET-BEFORE-US RACE

- “endurance” appears three times in the first three verses; it is the theme through v. 17
- The “race” is not a sprint, but a lengthy race that requires endurance
- the race has been “set before us” by God

EXHORTATION: LET US RUN THROUGH ENDURANCE THE SET-BEFORE-US RACE

- fixing our eyes upon the “of faith pioneer and perfecter, Jesus”
- the witnesses of chapter 11 provide encouragement in abundance
- Jesus is the par excellence faithful witness
- both the pioneer and the perfecter, the beginning and the end, of the (or, our) faith

EXHORTATION: LET US RUN THROUGH ENDURANCE THE SET-BEFORE-US RACE

- who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame
- who has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (1.3; 8.1)

IMPERATIVE: CONSIDER THE ONE HAVING ENDURED SUCH HOSTILITY

- *Analogizomai* (another NT hapax)
- it indicates not only careful thought about, but also esteeming and a sense of comparing
- consider *Jesus*, not the sufferings he endured

IMPERATIVE: CONSIDER THE ONE HAVING ENDURED SUCH HOSTILITY

- hostility by sinners against himself
- result (so that): you will not grow weary and lose heart (hendiadys)
- this is another concise restatement of what AH has been stressing throughout his homily

RECOGNIZE TRIALS AS DISCIPLINE FROM OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, 12.4-13

Our Tribulation as God's Discipline, 12.4-11

- though the readers had endured severe persecution for their faith (6.10; 10.32ff), they had not had to seal their testimony with their blood
- the athletic metaphor changes from running to boxing (another event of the Greek pentathlon)

Our Tribulation as God's Discipline, 12.4-11

- “yet”: they might be called upon to be martyrs in the future
- AH continues to indicate that the recipients of his sermon were in a period of rest or ease that has caused spiritual slackening; so . . .
- AH focuses not on persecution, but striving against sin

Our Tribulation as God's Discipline, 12.4-11

- they have forgotten Scripture's exhortation (this could be a question, "Have you forgotten . . .")
- discipline connotes education and training in Greek tradition; in Hebrew use, it connotes more a discipline by punishment
- hardship in the Christian life is our heavenly Father's training and disciplining us

Our Tribulation as God's Discipline, 12.4-11

- this discipline is necessary, it is that for which we endure
- to be a son is to be disciplined

Our Tribulation as God's Discipline, 12.4-11

*An a fortiori, on-the-one-hand, litotic,
rhetorical question rationale*

- on the one hand we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us
- on the other hand, shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits?

An *a fortiori*, on-the-one-hand, litotic, rhetorical question reasoning

- our earthly fathers disciplined us for a short period of our lives as it seemed best to them ('though imperfectly' is implied)
- our heavenly Father disciplines us for our good, resulting in our sharing his holiness, that complete sanctification that will be consummated with Christ in his glory at his coming (see 2 Cor. 4.17)



An *a fortiori*, on-the-one-hand, litotic,
rhetorical question reasoning

- to not accept God's discipline is a mark of rebellion against his Fatherhood
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Our Tribulation as God's Discipline, 12.4-11

EXCURSUS ON EISEGESIS ON "FATHER OF SPIRITS"

Some have used this phrase to argue for creationism over traducianism as the origin of the human soul. AH has no dog in this fight.

Our Tribulation as God's Discipline, 12.4-11

Benefits of discipline

- conceding what we all know from experience, AH acknowledges the sorrow brought through discipline
- it is not joy but pain (sorrow)

Benefits of discipline

- but, to those who have been trained by it (not merely having experienced it)
- it is for our good
- it “pays back” the peaceful fruit of righteousness

PROPER RESPONSE TO THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD, 12.12-13

- notice the corporate, other-focused nature of the exhortation
- strengthen the hands that are weak and knees that are feeble
- make straight paths for your feet
(Proverbs 4.26)