

## **Dr. David A. deSilva, Hebrews, Session 10a, Hebrews 11:1-12:3: Faith in Action (Part 1)**

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Hebrews 10:39 introduces faith as a key value to be embodied if one seeks to preserve one's life or one's soul. The author launches off from this point to develop what faith looks like in action so as to give further guidance to his congregation about the quality that is more than any other to define their lives and guide their steps. Outlines of the argument of Hebrews often differ concerning the point of transition from the content of Hebrews 11 to the content of Hebrews 12.

Any line of demarcation there is going to be somewhat artificial, not least because the chapter breaks were introduced centuries later. I would nevertheless suggest at least that we not think of Hebrews 11:1 to 40 as the discrete block of text on faith but rather extend that to Hebrews 12 verse 3 while admitting that Hebrews 12:1 to 3 also provides a seamless transition into what follows. The point, however, is that 12 1 through 3 is the climax in the series of examples of faith in action because that's where we find the example of Jesus, whom the author calls the pioneer and perfecter of faith, in whose example we see crystallized many elements of the exemplars of faith running through chapter 11.

Hebrews 12:1 through 3 also provides a strong concluding exhortation to the material in chapter 11. Hebrews 11:1 through 12 3 is essentially an example list, and it significantly resembles other ancient example lists, especially those composed in the context of trying to persuade the hearers either to imitate the kinds of behaviors or practices seen in these examples or avoid the vices and mistakes seen in the people who populate these lists of examples. If we were to turn, for comparison's sake, to Seneca's book *On Benefits*, where in books 3 and 5 we would find two such example lists that resemble the example list in Hebrews 11:1 through 12:3, we would find Seneca using the device called anaphora as a means of structuring that list.

Anaphora is a figure of speech whereby an author or a speaker repeatedly begins sentences with the same word or phrase, marking each new step in the discourse. In Hebrews, this is the phrase, *by faith*, or in Greek the single word, *piste*, which appears more than a dozen times in the course of 11:1 through 12:3. Seneca's example lists also have summary statements near their conclusions, statements to the fact that there are countless others that could be named, but I'll run out of time if I try to name them. The author of Hebrews uses this same device at the beginning of 11 verse 32, where he says, time would fail me to tell of a host of other examples of faith, to which he then makes the briefest of references.

Also, one finds in Seneca's example lists concluding exhortations to imitate the positive examples, the same sort of thing that marks Hebrews 12:1 through 3. Having

such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also run the race. The so-called faith chapter of Hebrews, then, sets out to demonstrate the praiseworthiness of the examples of faith. The fact that Noah, Abraham, and Moses, for example, have been remembered all these centuries proves to the audience that the way of faith is indeed the path to receiving the character witness of God that a person's life has been honorably lived and attaining a praiseworthy remembrance.

This is particularly important, considering the ways in which joining the community of faith has destroyed the hearer's honor and chances of a praiseworthy remembrance among their neighbors. The people held up as examples in 11:1 through 12:3 also outline what faith looks like in action. Several, most notably Abraham, Moses, the martyrs, and Jesus, appear to resonate pointedly with the audience's own past experience and choices in chapter 10, verses 32 to 34.

That is to say, the author has selected and shaped his examples of faith to address the specific situation of his hearers and to support his exhortation to continue forward in the face of reproach, shame, loss, and hostility. This is a litany of those people who, through faith and patience, inherited the promises as the author foreshadowed back in Hebrews 6 verse 12, thus filling out the picture of the model the author has held up for the addressee's imitation. We can make a few general observations about how the author of Hebrews depicts faith in this section prior to getting into the details of the text.

First, people who exhibit trust or faith look forward to God's reward and the coming to pass of God's promises and admonitions. Second, they orient themselves to their life in this world wholly on the basis of their knowledge of God's future. Third, they make their choices based on what course is expedient for attaining God's promised benefactions, even if that course of action means loss of temporal status, homeland, honor, wealth, and even life itself.

No hardship deters them from pursuing the goal God has set for them. Whether the path of loyalty and obedience toward God brings them fame or disrepute, deliverance, or torment, that is the path that they pursue in this life. They consider this world to be but the land of their sojourning, looking ever ahead to the city and homeland God has prepared for his people, the unshakeable realm, the city with foundations that cannot be shaken.

They live consistently here so as not to jeopardize their welcome there. The author opens his encomium on faith with a definition of what faith is. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen.

For by means of this, the elders received attestation. The author here attempts not a comprehensive definition but a definition that will focus the hearers on the elements of trust or faith, which are central to the author's exhortation. As a starting point, he

highlights the orientation of the faithful person toward things hoped for and unseen, aspects of living by faith that emerge repeatedly in the examples of faith that follow.

In the first half of the definition, the author uses the Greek word *hypostasis*. Faith or *pistis*, trust, is the *hypostasis* of things hoped for. In philosophical language, the word *hypostasis* can signify the substance or the underlying essence of something.

Hebrews 1:3 reflects something of this sense, calling Jesus the reflection of God's *hypostasis*, God's very being, God's essential character and substance. In everyday legal or business language, however, *hypostasis* could also designate a title deed or guarantee, as attested by numerous papyri as well as classical texts. If it is heard in this sense, the definition of faith in 11.1 also speaks directly to the believers' loss of property because of their loyalty to Christ and the Christian group referred to in 10.34. Both senses of *hypostasis* underscore the impression that the definition is not a subjective one, trying to explain what faith feels like, for example, a sense of assurance of things hoped for, nor about a mental conviction that faith produces, for example, a firm conviction about things unseen.

Rather, the definition seeks to reveal what trust or faith is in and of itself and, thus, the significance of having faith or trusting. Those who trust have in their possession, in effect, the title deed to what the person whom they trust will provide. They already have the underlying essence of the future good that they are hoping for.

The definition is calculated to motivate the hearers to hold on to their trust in God's promises rather than lose everything through distrust, as did the wilderness generation. In the second half of this definition of faith, the author uses the word *elenchos*. Faith is the *elenchos* of things not seen.

This word signifies an irrefutable or necessary fact. It is a datum that cannot be overturned by the opposition and that establishes one's case in the court of law or the council chamber. Since *pistis*, the word that we normally translate as faith or trust also had the meaning of proof in the law courts, the second half of the definition would carry a natural meaning in the context of this argumentation as well.

Proof is the establishment beyond doubt of things no one in the jury actually saw but upon which they must now deliver a verdict or the establishment beyond doubt of things that the audience in the council chamber has not yet seen but must plan for in advance. In this definition, we find a kind of reciprocal relationship between trust and these as-yet-unseen realities. Without trust, the latter never materializes, whereas by trust, the reality of these as-yet-unseen goods is demonstrated in the here and now.

There's also a certain relationship being constructed here between faith in 11, verse 1, and the author's discussion of hope in chapter 6, verses 19 and 20. Faith here is the title deed to the eternal inheritance. In 6, 19 to 20, hope is the tether that links one to the eternal harbor.

In this way, both faith and hope orient the hearers to holding on to what they now have in Christ and to their relationship with Christ as the first part, or the down payment if you will, of what is guaranteed to come if they hold on to what is now within their grasp, namely faith, and hope. Trust or faith is the beginning of something in which full possession and enjoyment are the end. In Hebrews 3.14, the author said that believers remain, quote, Christ's partners if we hold the first installment of the hypostasis firm until the end.

The first installment of the essence of these promised goods firm until the end. What the author meant in 3:14 is reinforced now and somewhat clarified by this definition of trust. If we possess faith and exhibit trust toward God, we have the title deed and the essence of that for which we hope.

Because God is completely reliable, God will follow through in delivering what God has promised. If we have hope, we are already anchored and moored in that abiding realm that we hope yet to enter. In the second verse of this chapter, the author quickly follows up on his definition of faith with an affirmation that faith is the way to gain attestation, *marturia*, for by this, by faith, the elders received attestation or approval.

Frederick Donker's study of inscriptions to benefactors reveals the frequent use of *marturia* and the word group built around *marturia* to express endorsement by Roman authorities of a person whom a local assembly wished to honor. It represented the authority's affirmation that the candidate was indeed worthy of receiving honors and was politically reliable. Forms of the verb *marturia* appear here in chapter 11 in verses 2, 4, 6, and again in 39.

This recurrence suggests that the author very much wishes to emphasize that perseverance in faith will result in a similar recognition of the addressees before God's court, a testimony to their worth, and a grant of eternal honor. In Hebrews 11, verses 3 through 7, the author pulls up several examples of faith exhibited in regard to matters before the flood or people who lived before the flood. So, in verse 3, he writes, by trust, we consider the ages to have been established by the Word of God so that what is visible came into being from things unavailable to sensory experience.

Hebrews 11:3 affirms the ultimate dependence of the visible on the invisible and thus the superiority and the ultimacy of the invisible realm. The visible realm is contingent upon and, therefore, less valuable and lasting than the invisible realm.

This verse may also serve to make the visible creation a kind of proof for the invisible realm from which it sprung.

The logic would be that the cause must also exist if the effect exists. This is part of the author's ongoing attempt to motivate the addressees to continue to place their hope in and seek their home in that abiding, lasting, ultimate realm beyond visible reality. This invisible realm will be a major focus of many exemplars of faith throughout this chapter.

Faith takes into consideration the unseen and future realities as faith charts its course of action. This theme will appear here in verses 3, 7, 10, 15, 20, 22, 26, and 27, and finally in verse 35. The heroes of faith make the proper evaluations and choices only because they are able to see past the visible, material, and sensory world.

In verse 4, the author holds up the example of Abel as an example of faith. By faith, Abel offered a greater sacrifice than Cain, through which he was attested to be righteous, God bearing witness alongside his gifts, and through this, though being dead, he still speaks. There was a fair amount of speculation during the second temple period concerning what made Abel's sacrifice better than Cain's in God's estimation.

We find this already in the Septuagint translation of Hebrew Genesis, where the Septuagint translator interjects something of an explanation for why Cain's offering was rejected. We read there that if you, Cain, had offered it correctly, but you did not divide it correctly, you would not have been sinning, would you? Speculation about the relationship of Abel's and Cain's moral qualities to the acceptability of their respective offerings is also well attested. For example, in Josephus's *Antiquities*, as he writes his expansive paraphrase on the opening chapters of Genesis.

For the author of Hebrews, it is the presence of trust or faith that makes Abel's sacrifice greater than Cain's, which also leads to Abel's enjoyment of that reality that he trusts God to provide, namely life after death. Genesis itself does not call Abel just or righteous, but *dikaioi*, the Greek word *dikaioi*, becomes a common epithet for Abel and a frequent description of his lifestyle through the second temple period and its literature. The author shares this tradition of ascribing justice or righteousness to Abel.

In Genesis 4, we read of Abel's blood crying out to God from the ground. This is a sort of biblical version of the saying, murder will out, rather than a suggestion of Abel's ongoing existence after he was slain by Cain. The author of Hebrews, however, interprets this as a signal that Abel, though dead, still lives beyond death and has the capacity to speak.

Abel becomes the first example of one who, by faith, lives beyond the grave, just as all who trust God shall live. Both the example of Abel and the example of Enoch shortly to follow underscore that living by faith leads to the transcendence of death, a theme that will echo throughout the remainder of this encomium. In verses 5 and 6, the author moves forward in time to the example of Enoch as he writes, by faith, Enoch was translated in order not to see death, and he was not found because God translated him.

For before the translation, he was attested to be pleasing to God, and without faith it is impossible to be pleasing, for it is necessary for the one drawing near to God to trust that God exists and that God becomes a rewarder to those seeking him out. In the Hebrew text of Genesis 5, verses 22 and 24, we get a small bit of information about the elusive figure of Enoch. There, we read that Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah 300 years ago.

Enoch walked with God, but he was no longer there because God had taken him. Once again, the Septuagint translation intervenes in the interpretive process between the original composition of Genesis and the author of the Hebrew interpretation of that story. The Septuagint version translates walked with God in Hebrew as pleased God, and so in the Septuagint version, after pleasing God for 300 years, Enoch was found no more because God translated him.

As with Abel, the author of Hebrews now interjects the quality of faith into the story of Enoch. This is the quality that brings one to the enjoyment of life beyond death and beyond this visible realm, such as Enoch was reputed to have enjoyed. Following the tradition of the Septuagint, the author of Hebrews speaks of Enoch being pleasing to God.

Forms of this word will continue to reverberate as the exhortation continues. We'll encounter it again in 12:28 and then in 13 verses 16 and 21. The author is promoting pleasing God as a primary value for the believer, one that brings the reward of crossing over from death into life.

This well suits his strategy of detaching Christians from the opinion and approval of outsiders, which would draw them away from attachments to the group, focusing them instead more completely on God's approval, which leads them toward behaviors that sustain the group and enact the Christian group's values. In 116, the author interjects a brief commentary on his portrait of the example of Enoch, answering the question, what is necessary if one is to please God? The author identifies trusting that God exists and trusting that God becomes a rewarder of those who seek him out as prerequisite to pleasing God. The author here reflects very much a patron-client context for understanding trust or faith, looking to and counting on God as one whose favor is worth seeking out and whose favor, when granted, can be counted upon to be delivered.

In verse 7, the author moves to his last pre-flood example. By faith, Noah, being warned about events not yet seen and responding reverently, prepared an ark unto the salvation of his household, through which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes with trust. Noah is introduced in Genesis 6-9, especially in the Septuagint version, as righteous, *dikaios*, and pleasing to God.

Again, using that relatively uncommon word, to be well pleasing to, *eiou erestese*. The author refers, of course, to the warning about the coming of the flood and Noah's reverent obedience in constructing an ark that was fully dry docked at the time. Warned by God concerning some future events entirely unavailable to Noah's senses and experiences, Noah nevertheless trusted God's word and acted accordingly.

Because he charted his course in light of those future unseen realities, he and his whole family gained safety and salvation. The author would have his congregation view their situation as analogous to that of Noah. Another day of judgment is coming, the day of final judgment and the cataclysmic, eschatological shaking of the elements which will remove the visible heavens and earth.

They must, therefore, like Noah, focus on how to prepare to discern what is truly expedient in the present situation. Like Noah, they are called to do what their neighbors might count foolish in the present time because what the future day of judgment will show to have been the wisest course of action has not yet been revealed. In Hebrews 11 verse 8, the author arrives at Abraham as an example of faith.

This is the first substantially developed example in this encomium, which, therefore, commands special attention from the hearers. The story of Abraham is particularly shaped to emphasize, first, the posture of the person of faith in regard to the social structures of this world and, second, the forward-looking quality of trust. And so we read, by faith, Abraham, being called to go out into a place that he was about to receive as an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, although he did not know where he was going.

By faith, he sojourned in the land of promise as if in a land not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise, for he was awaiting the city having foundations, whose craftsman and builder is God. The author doesn't emphasize here Abraham's confidence in God's fulfillment of the promise of offspring as the centerpiece of his faith, as Paul would focus on in Galatians 3 or Romans 4. Rather, the author focuses on Abraham's willingness to put his native land behind him in obedience to God's call.

People of faith willingly leave their comfortable rootedness in their native land in order to follow the call and promise of God, accepting the status of aliens and foreigners in any earthly locale. The author presents it as a deliberate choice on Abraham's part to embrace a loss of status and liability to dishonor and danger since sojourners enjoyed considerably fewer protections in the ancient world. And Abraham, of course, does all of this for the sake of obedience to God's call.

The audience would find the patriarch's willingness to embrace a lower status in the world's eyes to be immediately relevant to their own situation. They, too, like Abraham, have had to leave, in a sense, their native land behind. They might not have physically removed themselves from their native land as did Abraham, but they have socially removed themselves from a place of being at home.

And so, they find Abraham a fitting example for what they themselves have done, embracing, because of faith, a lower status in the world's eyes in the hope of greater honor in God's eternal city. According to the author, Abraham was not ultimately looking to Canaan, the traditional promised land, as his inheritance. This was for him the significance of Abraham's living in tents, even after entering Canaan, and proclaiming even during this time that he was still a sojourner and a stranger.

Throughout his time in Canaan, the author asserts, Abraham was still looking for a better homeland, understanding the heavenly abiding homeland, the city having foundations, whose architect and builder is God, as the true object of God's promise to him and to his descendants. The author understands God's promise to Abraham ultimately as the promise of the heavenly rest that the Christians are also to keep striving to enter. The addressees are thus indeed fellow heirs of the same promise, a point which the author will make explicit in the concluding two verses of chapter 11.

As the author continues to develop the example of Abraham, he comes to the more familiar aspect of Abraham and Sarah's begetting heirs well past the age of childbearing. By faith, Sarah herself being barren, he received power to procreate, and far past the age, since he considered the one who had promised to be reliable. Therefore, from one person were engendered, and these from a dead man, descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable sand beside the seashore.

The author introduces here the facet of Abraham's faith, which will be more familiar for a Pauline audience, namely Abraham's receiving power to engender children in the face of Sarah's barrenness and his own advanced age because Abraham considered reliable the one who promised. The idiom power for begetting is commonly attested as a reference specifically to the male contribution to conception. Thus, Abraham is still chiefly in view.



The author also recalls here what he had recently said in chapter 10, verse 23, where he had exhorted the hearers to hold on to the confession of their hope for the same reason because the one who promised is reliable. In this part of Abraham's example, the author affirms that life, in the form of countless offspring, came from one who had died. The tendency to translate this verse as something more like from one who was as good as dead takes a step backward from the stark language of the Greek, in which Abraham is simply described as one who had become dead or lifeless, elevating thus God's power to bring life from the dead.

The emergence of generations from the deadness of Abraham's procreative parts echoes the earlier examples of Abel and Enoch transcending death and will be further echoed in verses 19 and 35 as this encomium continues. This emphasis supports the author's goal of motivating the hearers to look beyond their present circumstances, even beyond this life itself, for the reward that God has promised. Not even death is sufficient to hinder God's delivery of his promised benefits to those who trust him.

At this point in his encomium, the author interjects a commentary on the examples of Abraham and the patriarchs, who are essentially in the same boat as Abraham, namely Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's sons, who continue to live as sojourners in a land not their own. As commentary, these verses are especially important for discerning the author's goals for his example list. This is what he doesn't want the hearers to miss.

These all died in a state of trust, not receiving the promised goods but seeing and greeting them from afar and confessing that they were strangers and resident aliens on earth. For people who say such things show they are seeking a homeland, and if they had in mind that land from which they had gone out, they would have had an opportunity to return. But now they reach out for a better, that is, a heavenly homeland.

Therefore, God is not ashamed of them to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. The confession made by these patriarchs, with both their lips and their lives, is especially important for the author, namely that they were foreigners and sojourners on the earth. This confession is an amalgamation of Genesis 23, verse 4, and Genesis 24, verse 37.

So, the author is indeed reaching back to the actual speech of the patriarchs, wherein the first passage, we read, I am a foreigner and resident alien among you, and in the second, I am living as a foreigner in their land. In their land is understood by our author as upon the earth, in contrast to a heavenly country, the author's chief interest. It is especially important for the author that the patriarchs did not turn back to the homeland and to the citizenship that they had left behind when they accepted God's call and set out in trust.

Rather, they persisted in bearing the lower status of foreigner and resident alien, embracing this status until their deaths, rather than desisting from their search for the homeland God would provide and seeking to regain their place in their native land. Philo of Alexandria, that first-century Jewish exegete, shows a similar emphasis in his treatment of Abraham. For both authors, Abraham becomes an example of perseverance and commitment to attain the end that God promises.

This is, of course, immediately relevant for the addressees of Hebrews who have suffered social dislocation and displacement, some of whom have begun already to detach themselves from the Christian group journeying toward God's promises and to turn back toward the bosom of the society. They could no longer endure living at the lower status and the lower level of social acceptance into which their commitment to Christ has brought them. The author here hopes to shore up the commitment of the remaining addressees to do as Abraham and the patriarchs did, persevering in the journey away from their native land in this brief material cosmos toward the eternal homeland that God has prepared for them.

Why is a heavenly country also a better country? Because of the patriarchs' trust in God's promises and their wise evaluation of what course of action is ultimately expedient, they have recognized what the author hopes his addressees will recognize: that which belongs to God's realm is eternal. Therefore, the goods to be enjoyed there are worth infinitely more than the goods that might be enjoyed in the earthly country and in the earthly cities in which the Christians dwell. Because of the wisdom of the patriarchs, a wisdom the author hopes his addressees will continue to emulate, God is not ashamed of them to be called their God.

Here, the author refers to God's identification of himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. This is God's witness to the patriarchs as people worthy to be identified closely with God's own name. We could compare this with an earlier statement in Hebrews 2 verse 11, where Jesus was also said not to be ashamed to call the believers his sisters and brothers.

Those who trust God and perceive the surpassing value of God's promises receive divine attestation to their honor through God's, or through Christ's open association with them, an association that will eventually lead to the trusting person's arrival at the divinely appointed goal, for God has prepared a city for them. Like Abraham, the addressees left behind their homeland and status in their native city in order to follow God's call and reach out for God's promised benefactions. While they didn't physically move, they were at least socially removed through their experience of open degradation.

The patriarchs rejected the option of returning to their native land, that is, to the enfranchisement and the protection from dishonor and danger that it brings. So

focused were their hearts on God's promise, and so firm were they in trusting God's reliability to deliver what God promised that they preferred a lifetime of disenfranchisement here in order to persevere in the quest for a better heavenly homeland. Thus, the author urges the addressees to imitate their example and to prefer the prize promised by God to the apostasy that would provide the surest route back to favor and status within the unbelieving society.

Refusal of at-homeness within the world manifests their loyalty to God and their commitment to God's call. The remainder of the space in this encomium on faith that the author gives to Abraham and the patriarchs focuses on trust manifesting itself in first the conviction that God's promises are more powerful than death and second the willingness to look even beyond death to the fulfillment of those promises. By faith, Abraham, being tested, offered up Isaac, and the one who had received the promises was about to offer up his only child with regard to whom it was said from Isaac shall your descendants be called, considering that God was able to raise up even from the dead.

Whence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. According to the preacher, Abraham's binding of Isaac was an act of trust in the inability of death to thwart God's determination to fulfill God's promises. In this regard, this episode joins the episodes of Abel, Enoch, and Abraham's ability to engender children as proof from history that faith looks to God's ability to transcend death to bring about what God has promised.

This episode is, of course, a landmark one in Abraham's story. The nature of the episode as a test of Abraham is highlighted in Genesis chapter 22, verse 1, as is Abraham's ready compliance, which made Abraham the supreme sign of fidelity toward God throughout the Second Temple period literature. As the preacher reflects on the story of Genesis 22, he comes to believe that Abraham was able to go forward with offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice because Abraham was confident in God's power to raise up Isaac, even from the dead, and thus still fulfill the promise of offspring through Isaac.

The story, therefore, becomes evidence of Abraham's trust in the irrevocability of God's promise, more than a story about Abraham's willingness to sacrifice the promise because of his obedience to God. This episode is followed then by three very brief examples involving the passing on of the blessing across the generations, as well as the forward-looking orientation of the person who exhibits faith or trust. By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things yet to come.

By faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and worshipped them at the head of his staff. By faith, Joseph, at his passing, considered in his mind the going forth of the children of Israel and gave commands concerning his bones. The brief reference to Jacob here worshipping at the top of his staff is another place

in which the author of Hebrews shows his familiarity with the Greek or the Septuagint translation of Genesis.

In the Hebrew text of Genesis 47:31, we read that Jacob bowed at the head of his bed. The Septuagint translation of this is that Jacob bowed or worshipped at the head of his staff. This is simply the result of introducing different vowels over the letters of the Hebrew word for bed.

But this must be quite relevant for the author of Hebrews since it is the only thing out of Jacob's whole story that the author of Hebrews lifts up. This image of Jacob, the perpetual sojourner, worshipping God at the head of his staff, his pilgrim staff, signifies Jacob's persistence in embracing his identity and reaffirming his hope as a pilgrim and sojourner through to the end of his life. The spare reference to Joseph shows just how selective and intentional the author is as he shapes this encomium.

There is nothing here about those things for which Joseph is best known—his resistance to temptation, his perseverance through hardships, and his forgiveness of his brothers. We have merely the mention of Joseph on his deathbed, as this allows the author to continue to highlight what is most relevant to his portrait of faith in action.

Even at the threshold of death, Joseph continued to orient himself in hope for the fulfillment of God's promise, the exodus from Egypt being the next step toward that fulfillment. Joseph is so sure of God's future acts that he gives specific instructions concerning the final resting place of his bones. In this way, Joseph contributes to the author's emphasizing that the person of faith is a sojourner.

Joseph still understands, even from his exalted position in the kingdom of Egypt, that he and his whole family still live merely in a place of sojourning and have no lasting home in Egypt. This is the posture of faith, to resist the temptation to see the place where one is as one's home, as a place finally to settle down and blend in. Even in lush Egypt, Joseph looks for a better heavenly homeland.

The second figure to receive detailed attention in this encomium on faith is Moses. By faith, Moses, after he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that the child was gifted, and they did not fear the king's edict. By faith, Moses, having grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing mistreatment along with the people of God rather than the temporary pleasure of sin because he esteemed the reproach of Christ to be of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking off to the reward.

By faith, he left Egypt behind, not fearing the king's anger, for he persevered as one seeing the invisible. As with Abraham and the patriarchs, the author shapes his description of Moses' faith to suit the needs of the situation of the addressees.

Moses' fame as the giver of the law and mediator of the covenant is nowhere mentioned.

What is central to the author's depiction of Moses' faith is his renunciation of a place of honor in the world's eyes and his choice of solidarity with the people of God, even if such association brought a radical loss of worldly status and potential for advancement. Moses' first enactment of is his refusal to be called a son of a daughter of Pharaoh. According to Philo and Josephus, two near contemporaries of the author of Hebrews, Moses was a member of the royal family of Egypt after his adoption, even being viewed as the heir to Egypt's throne.

At the very least, Moses occupied a place of exceptionally high status and honor. With Pharaoh as his head of household, his patron, and his benefactor, Moses had the power and status of a ruler of a great kingdom and access to the treasures of Egypt. But Moses renounced that destiny, a destiny that was his by virtue of being a member in the unbelieving dominant culture, his earthly heritage, in favor of a new spiritual heritage that came from belonging to the people of God.

He left behind the honors of Egyptian royalty in order to join himself as a slave, a people of the lowest status and subject to insult and physical outrage expressed here in the word mistreatment. The choice facing Moses, enjoying the temporary pleasure of sin or choosing mistreatment along with the people of God, resonates with the decisions that the preacher's audience has had to make in the past, as the preacher outlined in chapter 10, verses 33 and 34. The choices Moses made will also be held up for imitation in the community's present situation in chapter 13, verse 3, namely continuing to show solidarity with those who are in prison and those who suffer mistreatment as if in the body with them.

Moses' example is thus very important for the author's exhortation to this particular community. The pleasure of the Egyptian court, however, is qualified by two terms that suggest its lack of value. It is temporary rather than abiding, so the inheritance of the faithful is abiding and, therefore, has greater value than even the enjoyment of Egypt's treasure houses.

It is also qualified as sin, as that which separates one from God and puts one in a place where one stands under God's judgment. In this passage, sin is again presented in a way that suggests that the author is most interested in sin as what happens when fellowship with the people of God is refused or discontinued on account of the temptation to seek a place or pleasure in society of unbelievers. Sin occurs when one values the worth of God's friendship less than the world's friendship when one abandons ill-treatment with the people of God for the sake of honor, as Christ's enemies define honor and bestow honor.

Moses' choice is motivated by his evaluation of the respective worth of the treasures of and the reproach of Christ. With his eyes firmly fixed on the reward, he found that the latter, the reproach of God's anointed, constituted a greater treasure. Faith causes one to evaluate worldly realities in light of eternal realities, such that even reproach and dishonor before the world's court, endured on account of walking in obedience to God, can be transformed into the path to honor before God's court and be itself valued as possessing greater worth than worldly treasures.

In Hebrews 13 verse 3, the addressees will also be called upon to bear the reproach of Christ in their own circumstances. The example of Moses has been adapted to the pastoral needs of the audience in order to serve as a model for their own enactment of faith. And this adaptation may have led the author to portray Moses in something of a literary conceit as making the very same evaluation that the addressees must make regarding the reproach of Christ to be of greater value than the temporary pleasure of sin.

Like his parents, Moses also shows a lack of fearing the anger of the king and displays his lack of regard for those who have power over life and death by leaving Egypt behind. In Hebrews 11 verse 27, there is some debate here as to which departure from Egypt the author has in mind. Is it Moses' departure to Midian after murdering the Egyptian? Or is it his departure as the head of the Hebrews at the Exodus itself? The author probably has the latter far more likely in mind because Moses' flight to Midian was indeed motivated precisely because he feared the wrath of the king, as one could read in Exodus chapter 2, verses 14 and 15.

It is also the case, however, that Second Temple Period Jews rewrote the story of Moses at that point, both exonerating Moses for the murder as well as eliminating cowardice as a motive for his flight. The first-century historian Flavius Josephus writes, for example, that it was rather Pharaoh who was afraid of Moses and who sought to assassinate Moses. Moses' departure, therefore, becomes merely the act of a wise person who takes thought to preserve his life, and the flight becomes an occasion for him to exhibit wisdom and endurance.

Artaphanus, another Jewish author from the Second Temple Period, also tells the story of Pharaoh's jealousy and assassination attempt. Indeed, it is the assassin that Moses kills, now in self-defense. So, the author of Hebrews might not naturally associate fear with Moses' initial departure from Egypt.

The author's chief point, however, is that Moses did leave Egypt behind, just as Abraham left his homeland behind and as the addressees left their place in society behind. The attempt to decide whether this was the flight to Midian or the exodus itself is secondary to the author's own emphasis, and his own lack of clarity at this point may show his lack of interest in being precise. The focus of Moses' inner eye here is also very important.

The author says that Moses endured as one seeing the invisible, perhaps meaning specifically the invisible God. It was this that enabled Moses to make the right choices and to endure the hardships that those choices entailed. The addressees are challenged by Moses' example also to fix their eyes on the invisible one and unswervingly their course toward the unshakable realm.

The author continues to consider the example of Moses and segues from his example of trust directly into the trust in God displayed by the people of Israel in the exodus and in the conquest, concluding with the notable example of Rahab, the foreigner who recognized God's design for God's people and God's enemies and acted wisely in light of the coming judgment upon Jericho. By faith, Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood so that the destroyer might not slay their firstborn. By faith, they crossed through the Red Sea as through dry land, and when the Egyptians attempted it, they were swallowed up.

By faith, the walls of Jericho fell after having been encircled for seven days. By faith, Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed together with the disobedient since she had welcomed the spies with peace. The author here begins by thinking about the Passover meal as a celebration in advance of an emancipation promised by God but not yet made real in the earthly sphere by Pharaoh's acquiescence.

So even the Passover meal itself is another example of the forward-looking orientation of faith that celebrates now what God has yet to do or what God has promised to do. The sprinkling of the blood, a reference to Exodus 12, verses 7, 13, and 21 through 23, was an act meant to protect the firstborn from the destroyer, the angel of death, who is yet to make his way through Egypt so thoroughly scourging Pharaoh that Pharaoh would at last release God's firstborn, Israel. Both the Passover meal and the sprinkling of blood over the doorposts of the Israelites are done in trust or in faith because both pertain to God's forthcoming fulfillment of God's promises.

Their example again speaks clearly to the hearers, whom the author wishes to be convinced firmly that God's future acts on their behalf and God's future acts against the impious will show their course to have been the wise one. At the actual crossing of the Red Sea, an event recounted in Exodus 14:21 to 31, we find another extreme act of faith. Walking between two walls of water is, of course, a supreme act of trust as the Hebrews place their lives completely in the hands of God.

It is perhaps at the Red Sea that the wisdom of Moses' choice of company is also most sharply manifested. On that day, the value of belonging to the people of God was vindicated. The Red Sea becomes something of a prototype of eschatological judgment along with the flood in Hebrews 11:7. Successfully crossing through the Red Sea or being engulfed by the Red Sea prefigures that final day of judgment that

at once spells salvation for the faithful and destruction for those who have not cast in their lot with the people of God.

As the author shifts from the Exodus narrative to the conquest narrative, he looks to the display of trust shown at Jericho, referring to the narrative of Joshua 6, where God gave instructions and the assurance that the city's fortification walls would fall by a most unconventional means. Trusting the promise of God, Joshua's troops spent seven days marching around the city, truly an exercise in stupidity in the eyes of the disbeliever. Yet the person who trusts God's promises obeys God and honors God's commands, even if common sense says that this is no way to win a battle.

Within Jericho's walls, Rahab realized that her survival lay not within the fortifications of an earthly city but in partnership with the people of God. When the Hebrew spies infiltrated the city to gather intelligence, Rahab welcomed the spies into her apartment. Her story takes us a few steps back in the narrative to Joshua chapter 2. There, Rahab made a surprising confession of faith in God's promise to give the Hebrews the land of Canaan, on the basis of which promise she chose to become a traitor to her native city, giving hospitality and refuge to the representatives of God's people and taking pains to keep them safe and help them escape from harm when their presence in the city was detected.

Because she joins herself thus to the people of God, her family alone is spared destruction at Jericho's demise. The example of Rahab in Jericho reinforces the view that every earthly city is unstable and impermanent. Like Jericho, they can fall by the word of God without a single stone being thrown.

The worldly cities have no ultimate foundations, and the wisest course of action one can take is to seek peace with God by joining God's people so as to escape the destruction that will fall upon the disobedient.