

Dr. David A. deSilva, Hebrews, Session 10A, Hebrews 11:1-12:3: Faith in Action (Part 1), 6-min. Video Overview

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You know, when most of us think of Hebrews 11, we call it the Hall of Faith, right? Kind of like a museum of old-school biblical heroes. But what if I told you it was never meant to be a history lesson? What if it's actually one of the most brilliant pieces of persuasive writing from the ancient world designed specifically to help a community that was in a deep, deep crisis? So let's get into it. To really get the genius of this chapter, we have to start with the question the author was wrestling with.

How do you give people courage when they are suffering? When they are right on the edge of giving up and walking away? Because that's exactly where his audience was. I mean, just imagine. They were being publicly shamed, some had lost their homes and property, and they were basically being cut off from society.

The pressure to just give up, to abandon their little community, and just blend back in, it must have been immense. The stakes couldn't have been higher. So how does the author tackle this? Well, he doesn't just throw a list of famous names at them.

No, he builds this incredible, powerful, persuasive argument. And he uses a well-known rhetorical strategy to get his audience fired up and ready to act. And this is a really important distinction.

See, a history lesson just gives you facts and dates to fill your head with knowledge. But a persuasive argument- what the author is doing here- is different. He's using a classic technique called an example list.

The whole point isn't just to inform you; it's to give you models to imitate. It's designed to motivate you to endure, to take action. And the engine that drives this entire argument, the thing that gives it so much power, is a rhetorical device called anaphora.

Seriously, think of it like a drumbeat in a powerful speech. It's this repeated phrase that just builds and builds, driving the main point home with this incredible force. And you can feel this rhythm he creates right from the very beginning.

He just hammers it again and again, pulling every single story under this one unifying idea. It starts right here. And the beat just keeps going.

It creates this undeniable momentum, you know? Every example he adds just makes the argument heavier, more powerful. By the time you get through a dozen of these, that phrase, by faith, is literally drilled into your mind. It's not just a list of stories anymore.

It's this relentless, rhythmic, powerful argument for a different way of seeing the world. Okay, but to really get what he's building here, we have to stop and ask: what does he

actually mean by faith? Because his definition is probably not what you'd expect. It's not this fuzzy, abstract idea.

It's actually incredibly concrete. Almost legal. So, the first Greek word he uses is hypostasis.

Now, this wasn't some vague, hopeful feeling. In the ancient business world, a hypostasis was a title deed. It was your legal guarantee to a piece of property.

So, faith in this sense isn't just wishing for something. It's like holding the ownership papers for a reality that's been promised, but you haven't moved into yet. It's yours.

And the second word, elenchos, just doubles down on this. This word meant conclusive, irrefutable proof. The kind of evidence a lawyer slams down on the table to prove a case beyond any doubt.

So, get this: faith is the title deed to a future you can't see, backed up by the ironclad proof that it's real. Now, with that solid definition in our heads, let's look at his first big case study, Abraham. The author is so clever here.

He carefully shapes Abraham's story to speak directly to his audience's feeling of being outsiders, of being alienated. I mean, just think about it. The people listening to this felt like strangers in their own land.

And who's the first hero he holds up? A man who chose to leave his comfortable home, chose to become a foreigner, and chose to embrace a life of lower status and total uncertainty, all based on a promise. And this right here, this quote, it just captures the entire mindset. Abraham and his family, they got it.

They openly admitted, hey, this world, it's not our final destination. We're just passing through, like temporary residents. And that's because Abraham's eyes weren't fixed on the physical land of Canaan.

He was looking through it, beyond it, to something he couldn't see. He was looking for a permanent city, a real home with unshakable foundations, the one built by God himself. All right, let's move on to the next case study, because this is where the argument really builds.

If Abraham's story spoke to their feeling of alienation, the story of Moses is a direct hit on their experience with public shame and losing their social status. The contrast the author paints here is just staggering. Moses had it all.

He had the status of being Pharaoh's grandson. He had access to literally all the treasures of Egypt. And he threw it all away.

He chose to be mistreated with a bunch of slaves. He chose shame. He chose solidarity with the oppressed over all that wealth and pleasure.

So you have to ask, how in the world does someone make a choice like that? Well, the author tells us exactly how. He says Moses was able to endure because he was seeing the invisible. His entire value system got completely rewired.

He looked at worldly status and eternal reward, and he decided that even the shame he'd get for following God was a greater treasure than all the gold in Egypt. Wow. So from Abraham the outsider to Moses the prince and all the other examples in between, the author isn't just telling disconnected stories.

He's showing them and us this incredibly consistent and totally counter-cultural pattern of what real faith looks like in action. So here's the blueprint, right? This is the pattern. Faith always looks forward.

It orients your entire life around realities you can't see yet. It means choosing God's promises over what the world offers right now. Status.

Wealth. Safety. It means seeing this world as just a temporary stop on the way to your true eternal home and being willing to endure hardship for it.

But then the author brings his whole argument to this incredible peak. He says that this entire pattern of enduring shame, of giving up status, of looking to a future reward, it finds its absolute ultimate perfect climax in Jesus. He is the one who pioneered this faith and perfected it.

And just like that, this ancient piece of persuasion becomes incredibly present. It stops being a history lesson and becomes a challenge. It leaves every single one of us with this really provocative question.

If this is what faith is, a title deed to an unseen reality so powerful it can change every choice you make, what invisible reality is shaping yours?