

some notorious sinners, while on earth, a fearful foreboding in their consciences, with despair of being able to endure or to escape it. But what punishment can be sorer than to die without mercy? We answer, to die by mercy, by the mercy and grace which they have despised. How dreadful is the case, when not only the justice of God, but his abused grace and mercy call for vengeance! All this does not in the least mean that any souls who sorrow for sin will be shut out from mercy, or that any will be refused the benefit of Christ's sacrifice, who are willing to accept these blessings. Him that cometh unto Christ, he will in no wise cast out.

## Verses 32–39

Many and various afflictions united against the early Christians, and they had a great conflict. The Christian spirit is not a selfish spirit; it puts us upon pitying others, visiting them, helping them, and pleading for them. All things here are but shadows. The happiness of the saints in heaven will last for ever; enemies can never take it away as earthly goods. This will make rich amends for all we may lose and suffer here. The greatest part of the saints' happiness, as yet, is in promise. It is a trial of the patience of Christians, to be content to live after their work is done, and to stay for their reward till God's time to give it is come. He will soon come to them at death, to end all their sufferings, and to give them a crown of life. The Christian's present conflict may be sharp, but will be soon over. God never is pleased with the formal profession and outward duties and services of such as do not persevere; but he beholds them with great displeasure. And those who have been kept faithful in great trials for the time past, have reason to hope for the same grace to help them still to live by faith, till they receive the end of their faith and patience, even the salvation of their souls. Living by faith, and dying in faith, our souls are safe for ever.

## Chapter 11

### Chapter Outline

The nature and power of faith described.	(1–3)
It is set forth by instances from Abel to Noah.	(4–7)
By Abraham and his descendants.	(8–19)
By Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Israelites, and Rahab.	(20–31)
By other Old Testament believers.	(32–38)

The better state of believers under  
the gospel.

(39, 40)

## Verses 1–3

Faith always has been the mark of God's servants, from the beginning of the world. Where the principle is planted by the regenerating Spirit of God, it will cause the truth to be received, concerning justification by the sufferings and merits of Christ. And the same things that are the object of our hope, are the object of our faith. It is a firm persuasion and expectation, that God will perform all he has promised to us in Christ. This persuasion gives the soul to enjoy those things now; it gives them a subsistence or reality in the soul, by the first-fruits and foretastes of them. Faith proves to the mind, the reality of things that cannot be seen by the bodily eye. It is a full approval of all God has revealed, as holy, just, and good. This view of faith is explained by many examples of persons in former times, who obtained a good report, or an honourable character in the word of God. Faith was the principle of their holy obedience, remarkable services, and patient sufferings. The Bible gives the most true and exact account of the origin of all things, and we are to believe it, and not to wrest the Scripture account of the creation, because it does not suit with the differing fancies of men. All that we see of the works of creation, were brought into being by the command of God.

## Verses 4–7

Here follow some illustrious examples of faith from the Old Testament. Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement from the firstlings of the flock, acknowledging himself a sinner who deserved to die, and only hoping for mercy through the great Sacrifice. Cain's proud rage and enmity against the accepted worshipper of God, led to the awful effects the same principles have produced in every age; the cruel persecution, and even murder of believers. By faith Abel, being dead, yet speaketh; he left an instructive and speaking example. Enoch was translated, or removed, that he should not see death; God took him into heaven, as Christ will do the saints who shall be alive at his second coming. We cannot come to God, unless we believe that he is what he has revealed himself to be in the Scripture. Those who would find God, must seek him with all their heart. Noah's faith influenced his practice; it moved him to prepare an ark. His faith condemned the unbelief of others; and his obedience condemned their contempt and rebellion. Good examples either convert sinners or condemn them. This shows how believers, being warned of God to flee from the wrath to come, are moved with fear, take refuge in Christ, and become heirs of the righteousness of faith.

## Verses 8–19

We are often called to leave worldly connexions, interests, and comforts. If heirs of Abraham's faith, we shall obey and go forth, though not knowing what may befall us; and we shall be found in the way of duty, looking for the performance of God's promises. The trial of Abraham's faith was, that he simply and fully obeyed the call of God. Sarah received the promise as the promise of God; being convinced of that, she truly judged that he both could and would perform it. Many, who have a part in the promises, do not soon receive the things promised. Faith can lay hold of blessings at a great distance; can make them present; can love them and rejoice in them, though strangers; as saints, whose home is heaven; as pilgrims, travelling toward their home. By faith, they overcome the terrors of death, and bid a cheerful farewell to this world, and to all the comforts and crosses of it. And those once truly and savingly called out of a sinful state, have no mind to return into it. All true believers desire the heavenly inheritance; and the stronger faith is, the more fervent those desires will be. Notwithstanding their meanness by nature, their vileness by sin, and the poverty of their outward condition, God is not ashamed to be called the God of all true believers; such is his mercy, such is his love to them. Let them never be ashamed of being called his people, nor of any of those who are truly so, how much soever despised in the world. Above all, let them take care that they are not a shame and reproach to their God. The greatest trial and act of faith upon record is, Abraham's offering up Isaac, Ge 22:2. There, every word shows a trial. It is our duty to reason down our doubts and fears, by looking, as Abraham did, to the Almighty power of God. The best way to enjoy our comforts is, to give them up to God; he will then again give them as shall be the best for us. Let us look how far our faith has caused the like obedience, when we have been called to lesser acts of self-denial, or to make smaller sacrifices to our duty. Have we given up what was called for, fully believing that the Lord would make up all our losses, and even bless us by the most afflicting dispensations?

## Verses 20–31

Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come. Things present are not the best things; no man knoweth love or hatred by having them or wanting them. Jacob lived by faith, and he died by faith, and in faith. Though the grace of faith is of use always through our whole lives, it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has a great work to do at last, to help the believer to die to the Lord, so as to honour him, by patience, hope, and joy. Joseph was tried by temptations to sin, by persecution for keeping his integrity; and he was tried by honours and power in the court of Pharaoh, yet his faith carried him through. It is a great mercy to be free from wicked laws and edicts; but when we are not so, we must use all lawful means for our security. In this faith of Moses' parents there was a mixture of unbelief, but God was pleased to overlook it. Faith gives strength against the sinful, slavish fear of men; it sets God before the soul, shows the vanity of the creature, and that all must give way to the will and power of God. The pleasures of sin are, and will be, but short; they must end either in speedy repentance or in speedy ruin. The pleasures of

this world are for the most part the pleasures of sin; they are always so when we cannot enjoy them without deserting God and his people. Suffering is to be chosen rather than sin; there being more evil in the least sin, than there can be in the greatest suffering. God's people are, and always have been, a reproached people. Christ accounts himself reproached in their reproaches; and thus they become greater riches than the treasures of the richest empire in the world. Moses made his choice when ripe for judgment and enjoyment, able to know what he did, and why he did it. It is needful for persons to be seriously religious; to despise the world, when most capable of relishing and enjoying it. Believers may and ought to have respect to the recompence of reward. By faith we may be fully sure of God's providence, and of his gracious and powerful presence with us. Such a sight of God will enable believers to keep on to the end, whatever they may meet in the way. It is not owing to our own righteousness, or best performances, that we are saved from the wrath of God; but to the blood of Christ, and his imputed righteousness. True faith makes sin bitter to the soul, even while it receives the pardon and atonement. All our spiritual privileges on earth, should quicken us in our way to heaven. The Lord will make even Babylon fall before the faith of his people, and when he has some great thing to do for them, he raises up great and strong faith in them. A true believer is desirous, not only to be in covenant with God, but in communion with the people of God; and is willing to fare as they fare. By her works Rahab declared herself to be just. That she was not justified by her works appears plainly; because the work she did was faulty in the manner, and not perfectly good, therefore it could not be answerable to the perfect justice or righteousness of God.

## Verses 32–38

After all our searches into the Scriptures, there is more to be learned from them. We should be pleased to think, how great the number of believers was under the Old Testament, and how strong their faith, though the objects of it were not then so fully made known as now. And we should lament that now, in gospel times, when the rule of faith is more clear and perfect, the number of believers should be so small, and their faith so weak. It is the excellence of the grace of faith, that, while it helps men to do great things, like Gideon, it keeps from high and great thoughts of themselves. Faith, like Barak's, has recourse unto God in all dangers and difficulties, and then makes grateful returns to God for all mercies and deliverances. By faith, the servants of God shall overcome even the roaring lion that goeth about seeking whom he may devour. The believer's faith endures to the end, and, in dying, gives him victory over death and all his deadly enemies, like Samson. The grace of God often fixes upon very undeserving and ill-deserving persons, to do great things for them and by them. But the grace of faith, wherever it is, will put men upon acknowledging God in all their ways, as Jephthah. It will make men bold and courageous in a good cause. Few ever met with greater trials, few ever showed more lively faith, than David, and he has left a testimony as to the trials and acts of faith, in the book of Psalms, which has been, and ever will be, of great value to the people

of God. Those are likely to grow up to be distinguished for faith, who begin betimes, like Samuel, to exercise it. And faith will enable a man to serve God and his generation, in whatever way he may be employed. The interests and powers of kings and kingdoms, are often opposed to God and his people; but God can easily subdue all that set themselves against him. It is a greater honour and happiness to work righteousness than to work miracles. By faith we have comfort of the promises; and by faith we are prepared to wait for the promises, and in due time to receive them. And though we do not hope to have our dead relatives or friends restored to life in this world, yet faith will support under the loss of them, and direct to the hope of a better resurrection. Shall we be most amazed at the wickedness of human nature, that it is capable of such awful cruelties to fellow-creatures, or at the excellence of Divine grace, that is able to bear up the faithful under such cruelties, and to carry them safely through all? What a difference between God's judgement of a saint, and man's judgment! The world is not worthy of those scorned, persecuted saints, whom their persecutors reckon unworthy to live. They are not worthy of their company, example, counsel, or other benefits. For they know not what a saint is, nor the worth of a saint, nor how to use him; they hate, and drive such away, as they do the offer of Christ and his grace. (Heb 11:39)

## Verses 39, 40

The world considers that the righteous are not worthy to live in the world, and God declares the world is not worthy of them. Though the righteous and the worldlings widely differ in their judgment, they agree in this, it is not fit that good men should have their rest in this world. Therefore God receives them out of it. The apostle tells the Hebrews, that God had provided some better things for them, therefore they might be sure that he expected as good things from them. As our advantages, with the better things God has provided for us, are so much beyond theirs, so should our obedience of faith, patience of hope, and labour of love, be greater. And unless we get true faith as these believers had, they will rise up to condemn us at the last day. Let us then pray continually for the increase of our faith, that we may follow these bright examples, and be, with them, at length made perfect in holiness and happiness, and shine like the sun in the kingdom of our Father for evermore.

## Chapter 12

### Chapter Outline

An exhortation to be constant and persevere, The example of Christ is set forth, and the gracious design of

(1–11)

God in all the sufferings believers endured.

Peace and holiness are recommended, with cautions against despising spiritual blessings. (12–17)

The New Testament dispensation shown to be much more excellent than the Old. (18–29)

## Verses 1–11

The persevering obedience of faith in Christ, was the race set before the Hebrews, wherein they must either win the crown of glory, or have everlasting misery for their portion; and it is set before us. By the sin that does so easily beset us, understand that sin to which we are most prone, or to which we are most exposed, from habit, age, or circumstances. This is a most important exhortation; for while a man's darling sin, be it what it will, remains unsubdued, it will hinder him from running the Christian race, as it takes from him every motive for running, and gives power to every discouragement. When weary and faint in their minds, let them recollect that the holy Jesus suffered, to save them from eternal misery. By steadfastly looking to Jesus, their thoughts would strengthen holy affections, and keep under their carnal desires. Let us then frequently consider him. What are our little trials to his agonies, or even to our deserts? What are they to the sufferings of many others? There is a proneness in believers to grow weary, and to faint under trials and afflictions; this is from the imperfection of grace and the remains of corruption. Christians should not faint under their trials. Though their enemies and persecutors may be instruments to inflict sufferings, yet they are Divine chastisements; their heavenly Father has his hand in all, and his wise end to answer by all. They must not make light of afflictions, and be without feeling under them, for they are the hand and rod of God, and are his rebukes for sin. They must not despond and sink under trials, nor fret and repine, but bear up with faith and patience. God may let others alone in their sins, but he will correct sin in his own children. In this he acts as becomes a father. Our earthly parents sometimes may chasten us, to gratify their passion, rather than to reform our manners. But the Father of our souls never willingly grieves nor afflicts his children. It is always for our profit. Our whole life here is a state of childhood, and imperfect as to spiritual things; therefore we must submit to the discipline of such a state. When we come to a perfect state, we shall be fully reconciled to all God's chastisement of us now. God's correction is not condemnation; the chastening may be borne with patience, and greatly promote holiness. Let us then learn to consider the afflictions brought on us by the malice of men, as corrections sent by our wise and gracious Father, for our spiritual good.