

Hebrews 10:32-12:17

Overview

We are at the major division within Hebrews, marked by a shift in the use of the word “son” (Figure 1, chart). As the prologue announces, this is a major theme in the book:

Heb. 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us **by his a Son**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things

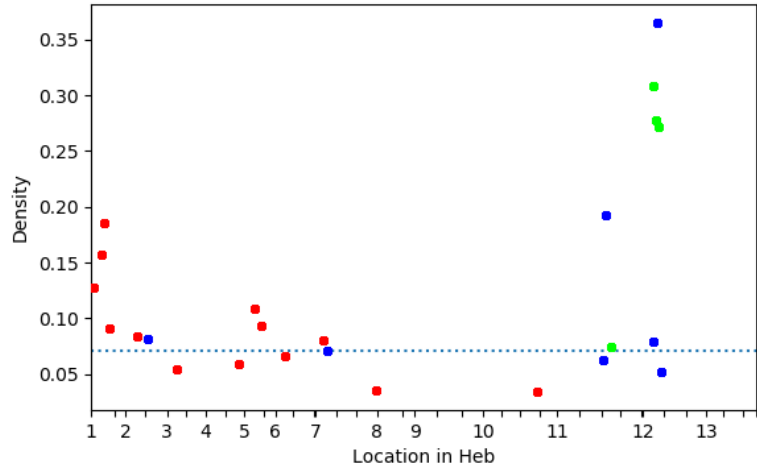


Figure 1: "Son" in Hebrews: **Christ**, believers (**plural**, **singular**)

Through the warning in 10:31, the word “son” υἱός G5207 appears 15 times. With two exceptions (blue dots), every instance is singular (red dots) and refers to our Lord. One exception, 7:5, refers to “the sons of Levi.” The other anticipates that the work of the unique Son will lead to “many sons”:

Heb. 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing **many sons** unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Indeed, the first chapter led us to expect just such a position, for after v. 2 states that God has appointed his Son “heir of all things,” we read that we will be “heirs of salvation” (1:14), the privilege of sons.

But none of the nine instances of “son” following the fourth warning refers to our Lord. They all refer to believers, either as individuals (green) or as a group (blue). This shift reflects the top-level division in the book (Figure 2), between the person and work of the Son of God, and the life of the Sons of God.

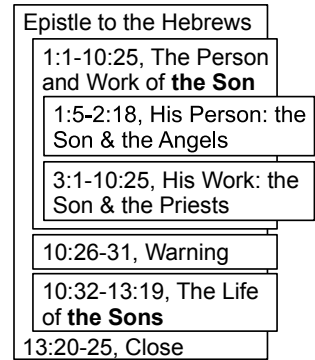


Figure 2: Overview of Hebrews

Within 10:32-13:25, there are two marks of division (Figure 3, chart). First, after an initial exhortation in 10:32, we have no imperatives until ch. 12-13, where they abound. Second, this cluster of imperatives really has two peaks, separated by a low density region that corresponds to the fifth warning. We have seen that the warnings function as hinges, and thus markers of division, between parallel sections at the same level of the discourse.

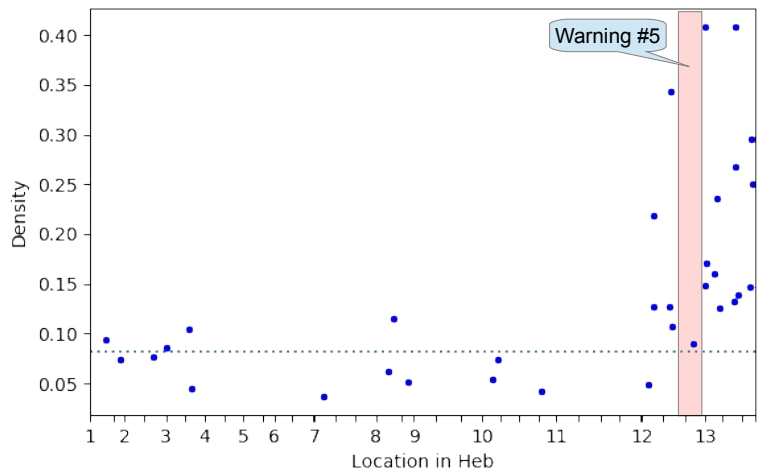


Figure 3: Imperatives and the fifth warning

Which division within 10:32-13:25 is stronger—that marked by the introduction of imperatives in ch. 12, or that marked by the fifth warning passage? We get some help by considering three words from the introductory exhortation in 10:32-39, two of which we have seen before: **Patience** *υπομ** (G5278 and cognates), **Faith** *πιστ** (G4100 and cognates), and **promise** *επαγγελ** (G1860 and cognates) (Figure 4, chart). These terms unify 10:32-12:24. Notice in particular how the instances of “patience” bracket the references to the faith of OT saints, which are examples of patience in the face of pressure from unbelievers. In the midst of those examples, we have a focused discussion of the promise.

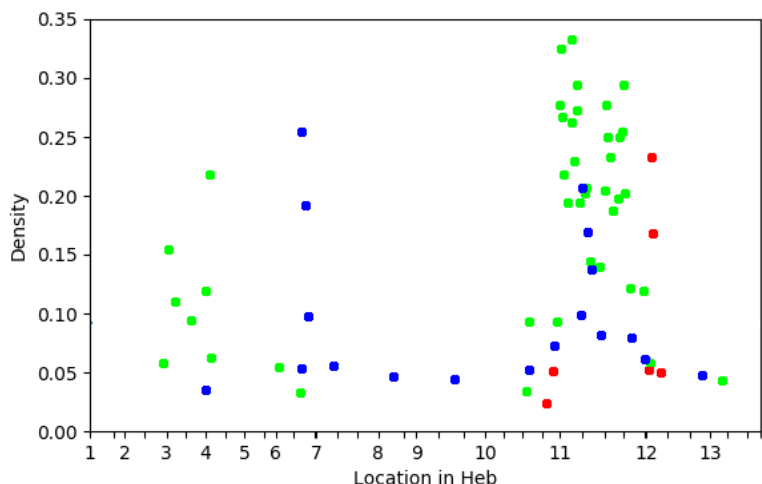


Figure 4: Distribution of **Faith**, **Promise**, and **Patience** in *Hebrews*

The references to patience (Figure 4) are restricted to this section. But each of the other two word families has two peaks, one in ch. 11 and one earlier in the book.

The *promise* was previously in focus at the end of chapter 6 (6:13, 15, 17; 7:6; 11:9, 13, 17), with its emphasis on God’s promise to Abraham. In chapter 11, the term is also describes mostly Abraham and his family. The focus of the promise was the land, the antechamber to the Sanctuary, God’s resting place.¹ So *promise* is God’s action reaching out to us.

We previously read about *faith* in chapter 3, where our Lord is described as a “faithful high priest,” and the readers are exhorted to faithfulness, lest they, like Israel in the desert, be excluded from God’s rest, the focus of the promise to Abraham. *Faith* is our response to the promise of God, by which we claim it.

The third characteristic word is *patience* or *endurance*, illustrated in the examples of ch. 11 and described in ch. 12. The overall logic of the section is that the key to our *patience* is *faith* in the *promises* of God.

On this basis, we propose the structure in Figure 5 (chart). As we have seen before, the warning separates two parallel sections. The parallel in this case is between living in the world (with unbelievers who hate us because they hate our Lord) and living in the church (with other believers). The section about living in the world begins with a summary introduction that recalls the example of the readers’ own steadfastness under persecution and exhorts them to continue in that virtue, then gives a more extensive set of examples from the Old Testament saints, followed by a more detailed exhortation.

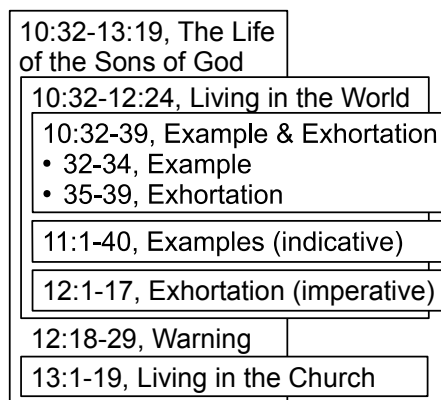


Figure 5: Structure of *Hebrews* 10:32-13:19

1 Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*. 2014.

10:32-39, Summary: Example and Exhortation

The two main sections to follow consist of examples of faith under persecution (ch. 11), and an exhortation to endure (ch. 12). They are introduced with a short summary that includes both example and exhortation—the example in this case drawn from the readers’ own experience, and the exhortation based on the OT (Figure 5).

32-34, Example

The readers themselves, in their past experience, furnish an example of the patience and endurance that he urges them to exhibit.

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions πάθημα G3804;—The reference is probably to the persecution of Roman Jews under Claudius. Suetonius records that the Jews rioted “at the instigation of one Chrestus,”² which could easily be a corruption of the title “Christ.” Classical Judaism was protected under Roman law, and Claudius’ antagonism may have been focused on Jewish believers and the unrest that they attracted (as in Paul’s travels). The writer here refers to sufferings that they endured after their conversion (φωτίζω as in 6:4).³

They experienced these sufferings in two ways, both by personal participation, and by supporting those who were being persecuted. Note the chiasm between these two modes (chart).

33a Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions θλίψις G2347; ... 34b and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.—He begins and ends with their personal suffering. They were oppressed psychologically, and also suffered the loss of their goods (which certainly would have been the case were they exiled from their homes).

They not only endured this suffering, but received it joyfully, because it reminded them that their true and enduring treasure was in heaven.

33b and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34a For ye had compassion of me in my bonds,—The second aspect of their suffering was their support for others who were more directly affected. In this case, the writer recalls their support for him during a time of personal imprisonment. One is reminded of the Philippians in their support for Paul while he was in bondage:

Phil. 4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with **my affliction**.
 ... 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

This notion of “suffering by proxy” is important. Later, the writer will exhort them,

2 Suetonius, Life of Claudius, 25.4 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:abo:phi.1348.015:25>): “He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.” See discussion in the introduction to these studies.

3 This word for “afflictions” appears elsewhere in the epistle only in 2:9-10 of the sufferings of our Lord. Recall Paul’s description of his sufferings πάθημα as filling up the afflictions θλίψις of Christ in Col 1:24.

Heb. 13:3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

In the security and comfort with which we have been blessed in this country, we sometimes become complacent. But we are members of one another, and should view the suffering of believers in other lands as our own, and do what we can to share it by our gifts and ministry to them. In addition to the care of the Philippians for Paul, the NT shows other examples:

- The gift sent by Antioch to Jerusalem in time of famine:

Acts 11:27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to **send relief unto the brethren** which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

- The offering for the saints in Jerusalem collected by Paul during his missionary journeys:

2Cor. 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the **ministering to the saints**.

Rom. 15:25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for **the poor saints** which are at Jerusalem.

So we should be conscious of the needs of other saints, and share their sufferings and afflictions. Based on their own past example, he exhorts them to patience, in their current trials.

35-39, Exhortation

This paragraph brings together the three key terms: patience/endure, promise, and faith.

35 Cast not away⁴ therefore your confidence [boldness *παρρησία* G3954],—The exhortation of this section conclude the writer’s four uses of this word. The first time it appears, he exhorts his readers, as here, to hold fast their confidence in standing as believers before a hostile world (as shown by the word “rejoicing,” *καύχημα* G2745 “boasting”) (chart).

Heb. 3:6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the **confidence** and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Then twice he reminds them of their bold access to the Father.

Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore come **boldly** unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb. 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, **boldness** to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

4 Aorist subjunctive with hortatory force, not imperative

Now, as in 3:6, he exhorts them to hold fast their confidence. The reference is again to their boldness before other people, which they might be tempted to “cast away” to avoid persecution.

Our Lord links these two kinds of boldness in Luke 12,

Luke 12:8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: 9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

If we have boldness to stand before the judge and creator of all, how can we fear when we are called upon to stand before his creatures, whose very breath he holds in his hands?⁵

which hath great recompence of reward.—From the time of God’s dealings with Abraham, he has emphasized our need to live with an eye to a future reward:⁶

Gen. 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great **reward**.

Our Lord reinforces this perspective: withstanding persecution brings reward.

Matt 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your **reward** in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

In every age, God’s people live in hope of a future reward.

36 For ye have need of patience,—A noun that is related to “endurance” in v. 32.

that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.—As with “reward,” the emphasis is on our future hope. We are not to expect satisfaction and comfort in this life, but to order our lives with an eye to what God has promised you.

He backs up this exhortation with two OT texts.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.—Isaiah wrote,⁷

Is. 26:20 (LXX, Brenton) Go, my people, enter into thy closets, shut thy door, hide thyself for a little season, until **the anger of the Lord have passed** away. 21 For, behold, **the Lord is bringing wrath** from his holy place upon the dwellers on the earth: ... 27:1 In that day **God shall bring** his holy and great and strong sword upon the dragon, ...

The sign of citation, which is a paraphrase, is the expression “yet a little while,” which appears elsewhere in the canonical LXX only in 26:20. Isaiah is comforting Israel in the face of her affliction, and reminds her that God is surely coming in judgment, not only on the wicked but also on the Dragon that has sought to destroy his people. Now God’s people under the new covenant can look forward to this same promised deliverance.

Paul offers the Thessalonians this same reassurance of deliverance through coming judgment:

2Th. 1:6 ... it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

5 See notes on distribution of these two themes in the rest of the NT.

6 These are instances of μισθός G3408. Only Hebrews uses this lengthened form.

7 The citation is from Brenton’s translation. The Hebrew speaks of the coming of wrath, but does not name the Lord as the one who brings it: “until the indignation be overpast.”

The next citation is from Hab 2:4 in the LXX (which differs from the Hebrew), but the writer reverses the two halves of the verse:⁸

38 Now the just shall live by faith ἐκ πίστεως⁹ [Hab 2:4b]:—The second half describes faith as the key to the life of God’s people, and brings this key word of ch. 11 into connection with the other two themes of this section, “promise” and “patience/endurance.” The exhortation to stand fast in difficulty is not novel, but the heart of the OT teaching.¹⁰ The writer is about to show us many examples of people who “lived by faith.”

but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him [Hab 2:4a].—Following the LXX translation,¹¹ the writer reports God’s displeasure with those who draw back or withdraw.¹² A particularly revealing incident is in Galatians:

Gal. 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, ... 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he **withdrew** and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

Peter withdrew or drew back from the fellowship of God’s people, out of fear of criticism. This same temptation now faces the readers of this epistle.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.—The writer is confident that his readers will not withdraw from the community, but persevere in faith to lay hold on the promise that has been set before them.

11:1-40, Examples: Promise and Faith in the OT

This section expounds the faith of 10:38-39, in four movements (Figure 6, chart).

- vv. 1-3 are distinguished from 4-31 by being in the first person (“Through faith we ...”) rather than the third, and introduce the concept of testimony μαρτυρέω G3140.
- vv. 4-31 give examples from the flood to the entry into Canaan that illustrate successive levels of faith.
- vv. 32-38 summarize examples from the judges and monarchy, illustrating the consequences of faith.
- vv. 39-40 correspond to 1-3, returning to the theme of testimony μαρτυρέω.

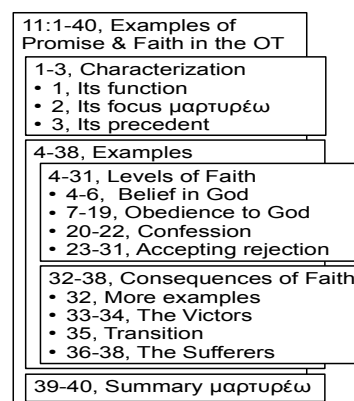


Figure 6: Structure of Hebrews 11

8 Again, we cite Brenton’s translation to show the correspondence of the LXX with Hebrews.

9 The Greek reads “my faith,” the Hebrew “his faith.” Variation between 3ms and 1cs suffixes ם and ך is common throughout the OT. The writer simply drops the pronoun.

10 The KJV follows the Hebrew accentuation of Hab 2:4b, which sees “by faith” as adverbial. This is also the easiest reading of the Greek, Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται (if it were adjectival, we would expect either Ὁ δὲ ἐκ πίστεως δίκαιος ζήσεται or Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ὁ ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται, though Koine is sometimes careless in its use of the article). But many translations and commentators take it adjectivally. For further discussion and defense of the adverbial rendering, see R.M. Moody, “The Habakkuk Quotation in Romans 1:17,” *Expository Times* 92:7 (1981) 205-208, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001452468109200704>

11 The Hebrew differs: “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him,” another instance of variation between 3ms and 1cs suffixes.

12 The word appears three other times in the NT, always of a negative behavior: Acts 20:20, 27; Gal. 2:12.

1-3, Characterization

He begins by characterizing faith. These three verses are set apart by an inclusio in the verb “to see” βλέπω G991, 11:1 “not seen” and 11:3 “things which are seen.” They present the *function* of faith, its *focus*, and an important *precedent*.

11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen βλέπω G991.—Taken by itself, this is one of the most confusing verses in Hebrews. We expect faith to rest upon evidence, not to be evidence. We do not view it as substance or reality of things hoped for, but as the process of hoping for a future substance. For this reason, most modern translations replace “substance” and “evidence” with words like “conviction” and “confidence.” But this interpretation is not only linguistically ill-founded,¹³ but also vacuous: if faith is just the conviction of things we hope for (that is, in which we have faith), it adds nothing to that hope.

Linguistically, the verse must mean that faith provides the substance and evidence of unseen, hoped-for realities. This can hardly refer to a subjective attitude: “If you believe hard enough, that will provide evidence and substance.” It must refer to some particular kind of faith, and the task of this chapter is to show us what kind of faith provides substance and evidence.

2 For by it ἐν ταύτῃ the elders obtained a good report.—This verse explains the paradoxical claim in v. 1, by describing the particular faith about which v. 1 speaks. To understand it, we need to clarify two details.

First, “by it [faith]” is not the same expression that we find 18x throughout this chapter,¹⁴ but a prepositional phrase, literally “in this.” “This” refers to “faith” in v. 1, and the expression means “in connection with this faith” or “in the context of this faith.”¹⁵ In other words, the faith about which v. 1 speaks is not our subjective faith. It is the faith of the elders, in connection with which “they obtained a good report.” Our attention is being directed, not to our own faith, but to theirs.

Second, “obtained a good report” is the passive of the verb μαρτυρέω (G3140) (chart). Elsewhere in Hebrews, this verb refers to God’s testimony in revelation. Thus, speaking of the story of Melchizedek in chapter 7, the writer says,

Heb. 7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom **it is witnessed** that he liveth. ... 17 For **he testifieth**, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

And to support his description of the perfection that Christ offers us, he quotes the new covenant:

Heb. 10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also **is a witness** to us: for after that he had said before, 16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Like Melchizedek in 7:8, the elders had divine testimony recorded about them, that is, in Scripture. We can paraphrase the verse, “God bore witness to the elders in the OT concerning their faith.” By that inscripturated testimony, they now bear witness to us:

Heb. 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of **witnesses**,

13 S. Baugh, “The Cloud of Witnesses in Hebrews 11.” *WTJ* 68 (2006): 113-132 offers a thorough exposition of this verse in light of the entire chapter. See note on passives of μαρτυρέω for qualification of some of his points.

14 The simple dative of πίστις

15 See note on prepositions with πίστις.

They are witnesses, not as spectators of our performance, but as divinely attested examples. They are not the observers of our actions. Rather, God has chosen them to be examples whose actions we are to observe. They trusted God for things hoped for and unseen, and their divinely documented faith provides us with the substance and evidence of v. 1.

This chapter is not about our faith, but about the inscripturated faith of the elders. They had faith in things that are unseen at the time they believed, but were later realized. God has recorded these episodes to show that faith is not in vain. These case studies provide the substance and evidence of God's unrealized promises to us.

Now we turn to a precedent for this idea that something immaterial can be more "real" than something physical.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that¹⁶ things which are seen βλέπω G991 were not made¹⁷ of things which do appear.—This verse is not one of the examples that follow, which are all in the third person, but gives a precedent for the claim in v. 1. It contains three statements, and we need to understand their logical relation.

The core statement is "the worlds were framed by the word of God," a summary of the repeated claim of Genesis 1 that "God said ... and it was so."

"So that" describes the implications of the core statement. Such a creation demonstrates that the things that are now seen are derived, not from things that are obvious to the senses, but from something much less tangible, God's word (or his intent, which is even less tangible).

The third statement is that we accept the other two by faith. The readers would never dream to question the assertion of Genesis 1 that the tangible world had its origin in God's intangible will and word. But this means they already accept that the divine word is more real, more fundamental, than its ultimate realization. If "things which are seen" now (βλέπω) had their origin in God's word, and that word was able to bring them into being, the readers should recognize that in their current trials, the assurance contained in the inscripturated faith of the ancients provides substance and evidence for the things as yet "not seen" (v. 1, again βλέπω).

4-31, The Levels of Faith

His examples all come from the OT Scriptures, which gives them their role as substance and evidence. They share three common features (Table 1, chart).

First, in each case the writer indicates the evidence that the elders had faith. The four kinds of evidence reflect increasing levels of commitment and risk on the part of the believer (chart).

- In 11:4-6, we believe that God exists and rewards those who seek him, and he approves.
- In 11:7-19, we hear his word and obey it.
- In 11:20-22, we tell others that we believe.

16 Commentators differ on whether the construction here is ecbatic (describing result) or telic (describing purpose). Alford, Lane, Ellingworth, Burton (M&T), O'Brien, and many others take the ecbatic meaning, while Delitzsch and Westcott understand it as telic, the only way the idiom is used elsewhere in Hebrews, which is what I prefer. But the difference in meaning is very slight.

17 I would prefer, with Chrysostom, to read, "... were made of things that do not appear," and have expounded it this way. See Delitzsch for an extensive discussion of this clause and the syntax of μη (which ends by preferring the KJV's parsing).

- In 11:23-31, we accept rejection for our faith.

These levels of faith reflect the challenge faced by the readers of the epistle. They all have faith at the level of Abel and Enoch, but need to face the possibility of social rejection (as will become explicit in 13:13).

Second, in each case faith never refers simply to mental assent to a proposition, but shows itself in action, in keeping with the exhortation of James,

James 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Evidence	Elder	Works	Fulfillment
God's Response to them	Abel	Offers a sacrifice	God avenges his murder
	Enoch	Walks with God	Translation
Their Response to God	Noah	Builds an ark	The flood comes
	Abraham	Leaves his country	v. 31 Exodus
	Sarah	Conceives seed	Birth of Isaac
	Abraham	Offers Isaac	God spares him
Their Statements to Others	Isaac	Bless their descendants	By v. 31, the people are in the land of promise
	Jacob		
	Joseph		
Separation from Unbelievers	Moses & Parents	Hide Moses	He survives
		Leave palace & Egypt	Divine reward
	Nation	Passover, Red Sea, Jericho	Successful Exodus
	Rahab	Hides the spies	Did not perish

Table 1: The Examples of Hebrews 11

Third, in each case faith in something unseen is later vindicated as the promise becomes real. Thus these case studies of faith become the substance and evidence for the readers' faith.

4-6, By God's Response to them

The writer begins his history with Abel, the first generation after Adam and Eve, to emphasize that faith has always been part of the life of God's people. But Genesis says nothing about faith until we get to Abram in 15:6, so the writer has to justify his statement that Abel (and Enoch) acted in faith. The principle governing both examples is in v. 6:

6 But without ᾠπίς faith it is impossible to please him:—The first two examples are people of whom God is said to approve. The argument is extremely simple.

for he that cometh to God must believe—The fact that someone seeks God reveals their belief (faith) in two facts:

that he is,—First, he exists. If that were not true, they would never seek him.

and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.—Second, they must believe that seeking him will yield them a benefit.

This verse does not say that everyone who believes in the existence of God and in his reward of those who seek him will receive his approval. Many have faith in things that are not really gods at all. But if the God of the Bible approves of someone who is consciously seeking him, that

approval itself demonstrates that the person in question believes these two things. This principle shows that the earliest two examples in the chapter had at least this minimum level of faith.

The writer's first example is of Abel in Genesis 4.

Gen. 4:3 And in process of time [at the end of days] it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?

He draws several observations from this text.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,—Cain brings his sacrifice “in process of time,” literally “at the end of days,” probably referring to the end of the agricultural season. By contrast, Abel brings “the firstlings of his flock,” the first lambs to arrive, and in particular their fat, the choicest part of the animal. Cain's gift was a safe one, a portion of the harvest after it was gathered in. Abel brings the first-born lambs, not yet knowing how productive the flock will be. As a result, Gen 4:4b says that “The Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering,” which is the evidence that he pleased God according to 11:6.

Two adverbial prepositional phrases tell us two further results of his faith.¹⁸

by which he obtained witness that he was righteous,—“Obtained witness” is same verb translated “obtained a good report” in v. 2, referring to God's action in recording Abel's action in Scripture. But where does the text say that he was righteous? The reference is probably to v. 7, where God says to Cain, “If thou doest well.” The implication is that Abel did do well.

God testifying of his gifts:—The critical observation in concluding that Abel acted in faith is that God was pleased with Abel's gifts (v. 4 “the LORD had respect”). This detail in Genesis, together with the principle of Heb 11:6, is what justifies the “by faith” at the start of the verse. “Without faith it is impossible to please him.” Abel pleased God with his sacrifice, showing that he acted in faith.

“Testifying” is again the verb indicating that God has recorded Abel's action in Scripture.

and by it he being dead yet speaketh.—The reference to the speech of a dead man alludes first of all to Gen 4:9-10,

Gen. 4:9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? 10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

These verses show the fulfillment of Abel's faith. He desired to make contact with God by his sacrifice, and God heard his voice and avenged his murder.

But “yet speaketh” in v. 4 probably does not refer to But the voice of Abel's blood condemning Cain is hardly relevant to the readers here. Rather, through the Scriptural testimony, Abel's faith speaks to the readers of Hebrews, and to us.

The next example is Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, from Genesis 5 (chart).

18 Taking the feminine antecedents of both instances of *δία* to refer back to *πιστις* (Leedy, Lane, O'Brien, Ellingworth), rather than the nearer *θυσια* (Westcott, Zerwick-Grosvenor, Koivisto).

Gen. 5:21 And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: 22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: 23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: 24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death;—Most people end this life by dying. Enoch was taken directly into God’s presence. We have three other examples of this in the Bible (chart): Elijah, our Lord, and us when the Lord returns.

2Kings 2:11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah **went up by a whirlwind into heaven.**

Acts 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, **he was taken up;** and a cloud received him out of their sight.

1Th. 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them **in the clouds**, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

and was not found, because God had translated him:—“Was not found” is the LXX translation of Gen 5:24 “he was not.” Enoch’s life of 365 years is drastically shorter than those of his contemporaries. The other generations from Adam through Lamech, all that are recorded before the flood, average 908 years, with a standard deviation of 59 years (see notes). He did not get anywhere near the age at which death would be expected. If his translation was not visible to his contemporaries, they must have been surprised when he disappeared without leaving a trace.

for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.—The “testimony” again is the divine witness recorded in Scripture. Genesis says twice that “Enoch walked with God.” That apparently was God’s recreation with Adam and Eve before the fall:

Gen. 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Such fellowship is evidence of agreement between the parties:

Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

It is cited as evidence of Noah’s righteousness:

Gen. 6:9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.¹⁹

We know that Enoch pleased God, because Scripture testifies that he walked with God. This, according to v. 6, is evidence of his faith. The same expression describes the works produced by his faith—a life lived in harmony with God’s purposes. Throughout his life, Enoch lived in the consciousness of God’s unseen presence and in keeping with what he knew of God’s will. God rewarded that obedient faith by receiving him directly into his presence, rather than bringing him through the usual path of death. The OT record of his obedient, fulfilled faith is substance and evidence for our hope.

19 The only examples of לָחַק Dt with אֱלֹהִים in the Bible are Gen. 5:22, 24; 6:9; and 1 Sam. 12:2; 25:15

7-19, By Their Response to God's revelation

The next two examples have two features in common.

First, they describe people whose faith is known, not just by God's response to them, but by their response to God's revelation.

- 7 By faith Noah, being warned of God ...
- 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called ...

The first is a warning of judgment, the second is a promise of blessing. This kind of faith goes beyond believing that God exists and will reward us. It requires us to hear and obey God's voice.

Second, both are said to be "heirs" or to "inherit," the only people in the list of whom this is said. That title is closely coupled to the idea of a revelation from God (chart). Remember from 1:2, 4, 14 that our position as "heirs" reflects our identity with the original Heir, the Messiah. Our Lord's position as heir is based on a promise from God (chart):

Heb. 1:1 God, ... 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed **heir** of all things, ... 4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath **by inheritance** obtained a more excellent name than they. 5 For unto which of the angels **said he** at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

Similarly, after introducing us as heirs in 1:14 and up to this point, whenever the writer speaks of us as heirs, he couples that title with God's promises:

Heb. 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience **inherit the promises**.

Heb. 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the **heirs of promise** the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

Heb. 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the **promise of eternal inheritance**.

It is fitting that the two examples whose faith is marked by hearing and responding to God's word are said to be heirs.

7, Noah

Genesis 6 records the warning to which Noah responded in faith (chart).

Gen. 6:13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; ... 17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. 18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

Noah is said to do three things "by faith"²⁰:

20 δι' ἧς has the same ambiguity as in 11:4; the context suggests that it refers to πιστις (Leedy), even though there is a closer possible antecedent (here κιβωτός, there θυσία, thus Koivisto). It seems to me that the expression is meant to echo the initial dative, both expressing means.

- He prepares an ark with the objective of saving his family. This is the defining manifestation of his faith. Two things led to it, described by participles:
 - He was warned of God
 - He was fearful.
- He condemns the world
- He becomes heir of the righteousness that is by faith

7 By faith Noah ... prepared an ark to the saving of his house—Here is the central act that marked Noah's faith. Two things led to this action.

being warned of God of things not seen βλεπω as yet,—Noah is the first example of someone whose faith operates in response to a word from God. “Things not seen” takes us back to 11:1. Noah had to choose between following the complacency of his generation, and believing what God told him about the coming flood.

moved with fear,—Being warned, he responded. The form in which we sense faith can vary widely. In Noah's case, faith took the form of fear.²¹ Noah recognized the threat posed by the promised flood, and acted responsibly.

Prov. 22:3 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

by the which he condemned the world,—“Which” probably refers to faith. The second thing he does by faith results from the first. The construction of the ark not only preserved his family, but also would have attracted the attention of his neighbors, leading him to share the divine oracle condemning their “violence.” Peter also recognizes this role of Noah's preparation:

2Pet. 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith κατὰ πίστιν.—The third result of his faith is that he becomes an heir. The writer describes us as heirs of salvation (1:14) and of the promises (Heb. 6:12, 17; 9:15) that lead to that salvation. Now one feature of that salvation is in focus, our righteousness. Noah is the first man whom the Bible describes as righteous:²²

Gen. 6:9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a **just** man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

“By faith” here is κατὰ πίστιν, “according to.”²³ The point is not the origin of Noah's righteousness—that is encompassed in the “by the which” (sc. faith). The phrase here rather indicates the character of his righteousness. His righteous conduct is consistent with somebody who has faith in God. The thought is very much that of James,

James 2:18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

His righteous works were epitomized by his obedient construction of the ark. That response to God's revelation shows that he is indeed a man of faith.

21 Usage (see note) favors “fear rather than “reverence.”

22 Noted long ago by Philo.

23 See notes for prepositions with πιστις.

8-19, Abraham and his Family

Most of the examples in this chapter occupy a single sentence. Abraham and his family get 12 verses, perhaps because he is the first person in the Bible who is said to exercise faith (chart):

Gen. 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And **he believed** in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

The reference to the stars in 11:12 shows that the writer has this passage specifically in mind.

A keyword in this section is “promise” (noun ἐπαγγελία G1860, verb ἐπαγγέλλομαι G1861). Hebrews’ first use of this term refers to the Israel’s lost hope of entering God’s rest:

Heb. 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a **promise** being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Then the writer gives Abraham as an example of how God deals with people through promise:²⁴

Heb. 6:11 And we desire that every one of you ... be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the **promises**. 13 For when God made **promise** to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, 14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the **promise**. ... 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of **promise** the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

The initial statement of God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 includes four themes: the **land** of Canaan, his **seed**, God’s **blessing**, and **worldwide dominion**.

Gen 12:1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram,
Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a **land** that I will shew thee:
2 And I will make of thee a **great nation**,
and **I will bless thee**, and make thy name great; and be thou a **blessing**:
3 And **I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee**: and in thee shall **all families of the earth** be blessed.

Thus far the focus has been on God’s promise to Abraham and the messianic High Priest of the order of Melchizedek, the one who blessed Abraham. Now we learn about Abraham’s response.

Changes in the subject of the verbs divide the section into four paragraphs (v. 8 Abraham, v. 11 Sarah, v. 13 These all,²⁵ v. 17 Abraham) (Table 2, chart). The paragraphs alternate between two facets of God’s promise: the place in the first and third, and the seed in the second and fourth.

Paragraph	Subject of Verb	Topic
11:8-10	Abraham ... obeyed	Place, country, city
11:11-12	Sarah ... received strength	Seed
11:13-16	These all died in faith	Country, city
11:17-19	Abraham ... offered up	Seed

Table 2: The Faith of Abraham

24 “Promise” in the NT overwhelmingly refers to Abraham; see

<https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/christmas/notes/Christmas11ThePromise.pdf>

25 The plural subject in v. 13 recalls v. 12, which is explaining the result of Sarah’s faith in v. 11. But the topic in v. 12 continues to be the promised seed, shifting back to the city only in v. 13., and “these all” in v. 13 refers to the first generations and does not include the multitude of v. 12. v. 12 is thus transitional between 11 and 13.

The first paragraph describes the first part of God’s promise to Abraham, “a land that I will shew thee.” The writer characterizes Abraham’s faith in two ways, then explains his motive.

8-10, Abraham’s Journey

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.—The first characteristic of Abraham’s faith is self-surrender.²⁶ He did not know the destination, and had no independent way of deciding whether it was better than where he was. Yet he gave up his current situation in obedience to the Lord.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:—The second characteristic of his faith is patience. Though he was promised possession of the land, he occupied it only as a nomad, living in tents rather than in a settled city. When his wife died, he had to purchase land God had promised to give him in order to bury her. Isaac and Jacob also lived as strangers in the land, knowing the promise but not experiencing it.

In fact, Israel did ultimately possess the land that God promised Abraham, and that fulfillment of his faith is documented as we move through the rest of the examples, culminating in 11:30, “the walls of Jericho fell down.” But Abraham’s faith reached beyond the physical land of Israel.

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.—The vision that motivated his self-surrender and patience was a far better place than the physical land. We have encountered this theme already. In 3:7-4:13, the writer recounted Israel’s experience in the desert, based on Psalm 95. They were on their way to the land of Canaan, where God promised them rest. But because of their sin, God swore, “They shall not enter into my rest” (Heb 3:11; Psa 95:11). Yet that rest goes beyond the physical land, for our writer said,

Heb. 4:8 For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. . . . 11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Joshua *did* bring them into the land, and even defeated the king of Jerusalem (Joshua 10), where God’s temple would ultimately rest. But Abraham longed for something better, a heavenly home.

11-12, Sarah’s Conception

11 Through²⁷ faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed²⁸, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.—The second paragraph turns from Abraham to Sarah, and from the theme of the promised city to that of the promised offspring. Some people are surprised to read of Sarah’s faith, because her response to the angelic visitors in Genesis 18 sounds more like doubt than faith (chart).

Gen. 18:10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? 13 And the LORD said unto

²⁶ The term is due to Westcott.

²⁷ Dative, as with the other elders

²⁸ The verb is elsewhere used of the male activity, and should be translated here to reflect this, “Sarah received strength for the depositing of seed [by Abraham]. Thus Allen and the older commentators.

Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? 14 Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. 15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

She did indeed doubt initially, but Abraham, the man of faith, was able to encourage his doubting wife and bring her to a point of faith in the promise she had overheard in ch. 18. In that faith, they together brought Isaac into the world, claiming the promise of God.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.—The promise of offspring like the stars is in Gen 15:5; the sand is added in 22:17. And at the time the nation entered the land, the description of stars is fulfilled.²⁹

Deut. 1:10 The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day **as the stars of heaven** for multitude. (cf. also Neh 9:23)

In the third paragraph of the Abraham section, the subject changes again, from “Sarah” to “these all.” The reference is not to the innumerable progeny of 11:12, some of whom did enter the land of promise, but to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah, named in vv. 8-11.

13-16, The Pilgrim’s Prospect

13 These all died in faith κατὰ πίστιν,—The expression is not the common dative, translated 18x “in faith” at the beginning of verses, but the one that describes Noah’s righteousness in v. 7, meaning “according to faith,” or “in keeping with faith.” Noah’s righteousness was what one would expect of a righteous person. So was the death of the patriarchs. The rest of the verse describes what it means to die “according to faith,” to die as a person of faith dies. This description is particularly relevant for the readers of the epistle, some of whom may be called upon to endure death for their faith. Such a death has five characteristics:

not having received λαμβάνω the promises,—First, a death “according to faith” occurs without having received that which is the object of one’s dearest hopes. The next three characteristics of those who die “according to faith” describe their relation to the object of their faith.

but having seen them afar off,—Second, they perceive these distant promises. This is a remarkable statement. 11:1 has characterized faith as dealing with things hoped for but not seen.³⁰ But in this chapter the faithful “see” what they have hoped for; compare Moses,

Heb. 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, **as seeing** him who is invisible.

Indeed, their faith was “substance” and “evidence,” for it enabled them to see things that were invisible to one without faith.

and were persuaded of them,³¹—Third, amplifying “seen,” they are certain of those promises.

and embraced them,—Fourth, they accepted them in personal commitment.

All of these are essential to true faith. Faith is not simply understanding what the Bible teaches or giving mental assent to its truth. We must embrace it, welcome it, claim it as our own.

29 By the time of the monarchy, the description of the sand is also used (2 Sam 17:11; 1 Ki 4:20).

30 Compare Paul’s references to sight in 2 Cor 5:7; Rom 8:24; which however use “sight” and “seen” literally.

31 This clause, in the TR but not the MT, may have originated as a comment amplifying “seen.”

and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.—Fifth, they accepted death by acknowledging the transience of life. The writer recalls a striking statement that they made, starting with Abraham’s words to the Hittites when he sought to bury Sarah (chart). Facing death, he realizes that this world cannot be his ultimate destination.

Gen. 23:3 And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, 4 I am a **stranger** (גֵר H1616) **and a sojourner** with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

His grandson Jacob described his condition in the same way before Pharaoh:

Gen. 47:8 And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? 9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my **pilgrimage** (מגור H4033, cognate to גֵר) are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their **pilgrimage**.

We might expect this of Abraham, still dwelling in tents, or of Jacob, exiled from the land of promise. But remarkably, even after David has conquered Jerusalem and made preparation for Solomon to build the temple, he makes this same confession (like Abraham, w.r.t. death):

1Chr. 29:15 For **we are strangers before thee, and sojourners**, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

He says the same thing in Psalm 39,

Psa. 39:12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: **for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner**, as all my fathers were.

The author of Psalm 119 concurs:

Psa. 119:19 I am a **stranger in the earth**: hide not thy commandments from me.

And Peter enjoins this same attitude on his readers:

1Pet. 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you **as strangers and pilgrims**, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

What does it mean to be a “stranger and a pilgrim”? Paul captures the critical distinction in Philippians.

Phil. 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our **conversation** is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

The word “conversation” in v. 20 appears only here in the NT. Elsewhere in Greek it refers to a state or commonwealth.³² Paul is telling the Philippians that their true loyalty is to heaven. They carry heaven’s passport, not earth’s, and so should not “mind earthly things,” as the judaizers do.

This insight has strong implications for our daily lives, particularly given the politically charged atmosphere in which we live. In a polarized society, one is constantly under pressure to take sides. We must steadfastly resist this temptation. When I visit France, or Germany, or Japan, or the UK, I may be interested in their political discussions, but ultimately these have no hold on me. I

32 The standard study, with a very thorough discussion of this word, is A.Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, chapter 4.

am a stranger, just passing through. I need to obey their laws while I am there and respect their customs, but ultimately what they do has no impact on me, for my home is elsewhere.

Remember the words of Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon:

Jer. 29:5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; 6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. 7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.³³ ... 10 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

You're going to be there for 70 years. So make yourselves useful, seek the peace of the land, and pray for it. But in all this, remember that it is not your commonwealth. At the end of 70 years the Lord will bring you back to your true home.

So the believer lives in the world today, productive and respectful, but recognizing that when his three score and ten years are done, and perhaps before, he will go to his true home.

This is what it means to “die according to faith”: not having received the promises, but believing and embracing them, and keeping a light grip on the things through which we pass on our way to our true destination.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.—This confession of being a stranger and pilgrim substantiates what the writer has already claimed about Abraham in v. 10, that he sought a heavenly city, and now the writer expands on this theme.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.—The possibility of return was present to Abraham's mind when he sent Eliezer to find a bride for Isaac (chart).

Gen. 24:1 And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: 3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that **thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell**: 4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. 5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? 6 And Abraham said unto him, **Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again**. 7 The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, **Unto thy seed will I give this land**; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. 8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: **only bring not my son thither again**.

33 Paul echoes Jer 29:7 in 1Tim. 2, “I exhort ... that ... supplications, **prayers**, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made ... 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and **peaceable** life ...”

Abraham tells Eliezer to be careful of two things, which at first appear contradictory, but reflect his status as a stranger and a pilgrim. Eliezer must not take a local wife, but send to Haran for someone from Abraham's family. He also must not move Isaac back to Haran. If Isaac marries a local girl, he is likely to be assimilated into the population, and would cease to be a stranger and pilgrim any longer. But if he goes back to Haran, he forfeits the promise of the land, and again he would cease to be a stranger and pilgrim. He is to live in Canaan, but as an outsider, holding the promise but not the realization, as Abraham did before him.

The readers of the epistle face a similar choice. They dare not go back into Judaism, abandoning the glories of Messiah's redemption and kingdom that they have seen from afar. At the same time, they dare not assimilate into the pagan society of Rome. And we face the same challenge, to live lives focused on an unrealized promise in the midst of a hostile environment.

16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly:—Abraham's hope went beyond Canaan. His statement when he buried Sarah indicates that even in the physical land that God had promised him, he was still a stranger. His home lay elsewhere, in heaven. And in years following, even after the establishment of the nation in the land and Jerusalem as its capital, faithful saints would still confess themselves as strangers and sojourners.

wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.—The writer's exposition of Psalm 95 in ch. 3-4 has already introduced the notion of our destination as God's resting place, his heavenly sanctuary. Now the writer amplifies this theme.

Here, the destination is a city, the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:26; Revelation 21).

Heb. 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, **the heavenly Jerusalem**, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Heb. 13:13 Let us go forth ἐξέρχομαι G1831 (as Abraham in 11:8) therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek **one to come**.

But the language about God's preparation suggests we should think further (see note). The Greek verb is aorist, not perfect, and other references show that we are not to think of this preparation as completed, but in process. Consider the things that are being prepared (chart).

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions [abiding places]: if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you.**

When we studied John, I suggested that the "Father's house" here is a reference to the church, and that the abiding places are the various gifts in the church, given by the Holy Spirit. The Lord later tells the disciples that the Spirit's coming depends on his going to the Father (John 16:7), and the noun translated "abiding places" is cognate with one of John's favorite words describing our relation to the Lord himself, "Abide in me, and I in you" (e.g., John 15:4, 7). Perhaps the traditional explanation of "the Father's house" as heaven is after all what the Lord meant?

But other things are said to be "prepared" as well:

Rev. 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, **prepared** as a bride adorned for her husband.

Paul describes how the Lord is doing this preparation:

Eph. 5:25 Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a

glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Finally, we are warned not to think we can reduce to simple terms what God has promised:

1Cor. 2:9 But as it is written [Isa 64:4], Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, **the things which God hath prepared** for them that love him.

Consider the equivalences in Figure 7 (chart). There are three main metaphors in the NT for the church, and all reflect this preparation.

First, the church is God’s resting place—his sanctuary:

Eph. 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto **an holy temple** in the Lord: 22 In whom **ye also are builded together for an habitation of God** through the Spirit.

In some passages, this resting place is described as a city, or a country. but it is where God dwells. And Heb 11:16 says that He is preparing it for us.

Second, it is the bride of Christ:³⁴

Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your **wives, even as Christ also loved the church**, and gave himself for it;

Rev 21:2 tells us that the bride is the object of a process of preparation as well. Rev 19:7 places the responsibility for this preparation on the bride, but Eph 5:25-27 describes this process as driven by the Lord.

Third, it is the body of Christ:

Eph. 1:22 the **church**, 23 Which is **his body**, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12 spell out the implications of this metaphor: the Spirit gives each of us a gift, an ability to minister in a specific role, like the members of a body. These capabilities are not static, but need to be stirred up and developed over time (2 Tim 1:6).³⁵ As the bride prepares herself, so we stir up the gifts, but under the Spirit’s enabling (Phil 2:12-13).

Each of these images is in turn identified with the other two. Thus God’s resting place, the heavenly Jerusalem, is called the bride:

Rev. 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels ... saying, Come hither, I will shew thee **the bride, the Lamb’s wife**. 10 And he ... shewed me that great city, **the holy Jerusalem**, descending out of heaven from God,

The sanctuary is also identified with the body of Christ. It is the tabernacle in which the eternal word came among his people:

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [**tabernacled**] among us

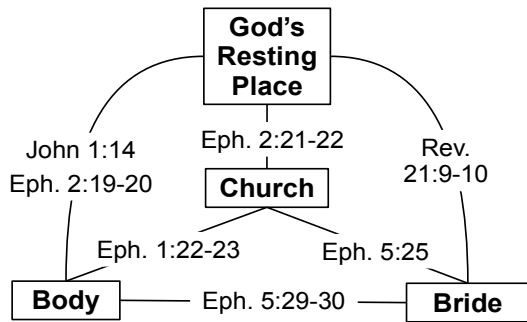


Figure 7: What has God prepared for us?

34 Zeph 3:17 suggests that the Bride also brings God rest: “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; **he will rest in his love**, he will joy over thee with singing.”

35 The verb ἐτοιμάζω is not used of this preparation, but 2 Tim 2:21 does use it in another metaphor for our roles as vessels for different purposes.

Our Lord is the chief corner stone, and (in 1 Cor 3:11, the foundation) of the spiritual temple:

Eph. 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone**;

Finally, the relation between the Lord and his church is described in terms of the one-flesh relationship by which a man cares for his bride as he does for his own body:

Eph. 5:29 For no man ever yet hated **his own flesh**; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, **even as the Lord the church**: 30 For we are members of his body, ...

So just what is God preparing for us? He is preparing the heavenly city of God, but he is also preparing his body as each member matures in the role that God has given it, and he is preparing his bride as he sanctifies and cleanses us. We do not yet enter the heavenly city; the body is not yet perfect; the bride is not yet ready for the wedding, but in this age the Lord has given us the church, filling all three of these roles in this present age, and serving as the central tool in this process of preparation. Indeed, as Paul says,

1Cor. 2:9 But as it is written [Isa 64:4], Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, **the things which God hath prepared** for them that love him.

17-19, Abraham's Final Test

Now the writer returns to Abraham. Part of the promise was descendants, miraculously confirmed with the birth of Isaac. Yet the time comes when God seems to retract his gift.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:—Why would God do such a thing? Abraham is forced to consider which he loves more—the son whom God has given, or the God who has given him a son. This distinction is tricky. If we didn't love what God has given us, it wouldn't be much of a gift ... but if we use it to justify disobeying the Lord, we've lost the whole show.

Consider two other examples of this tension (chart). The first is Jacob on his way to Egypt. He knows from his father Isaac and grandfather Jacob that the land is to be theirs. Yet God sends him out of the land, to Egypt, to preserve the family in time of famine.

Gen 46:2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. 3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: 4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

Jacob obeys the Giver rather than clinging to the Gift. But in 586 BC, when Jerusalem is destroyed, the nation's leaders fail this test. Jerusalem is the crowning jewel of God's gift of the land, the location of Solomon's beautiful temple. Jeremiah delivers to them the word of the Lord that they should abandon the temple and Jerusalem and surrender to the king of Babylon:

Jer. 38:17 Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house: 18 But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

Encouraged by the priests and nobles, Zedekiah refuses to surrender. He clings to God's gift rather than obeying God. The result is that he ends up a captive anyway, and the city is destroyed.

Where did Abraham find the courage to follow this terrible command? The writer goes on,

19 Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.—The writer claims that Abraham expected God to raise Isaac from the dead. The basis of this claim is probably Abraham's words to his servants as he and Isaac set out for the final stage of the journey (chart):

Gen 22:5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.³⁶

All three of the verbs used by Abraham in the last half of the verse are plural. He and Isaac will both go, worship, and come again. How could he say this, knowing that God had commanded him to kill Isaac, and being fully yielded to the divine command? He trusted God to restore his son so that the promise of the seed through Isaac could be fulfilled.

20-22, By their Statements to Others³⁷

The next three examples are people who, based on the promises received by their forebearers, pass on a blessing to their progeny (chart). They believe in God's promises, not only for themselves, but for their descendants. This level of faith requires them to make a commitment to others, which goes beyond obeying God themselves.

Each of these blessings echoes part of the promise to Abraham:

Gen 12:1 Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a **land** that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a **great nation**, and **I will bless thee**, and make thy name great; and be thou a **blessing**: 3 And **I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee**: and in thee shall **all families of the earth** be blessed.

20 By **faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.**—Recall how Jacob stole the blessing. Isaac's blessing to Jacob echoes the fourth point of the blessing to Abraham, the reciprocal blessing and cursing (chart).

Gen. 27:27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed: 8 Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: 29 Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: **cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.**

The blessing to Esau echoes none of these elements, but does "concern things to come," anticipating the age-long tension between the Edomites and Israel, culminating in the threat of Herod the Great against the Messiah.

Gen. 27:39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; 40 And by thy sword shalt

36 The first and third of Abraham's verbs are cohortative, and the second, an imperfect lamedh-he, may be read this way too (Gesenius §751). The whole statement expresses his hopeful expectation: "May we ..."

37 A. Parunak pointed out the unity of this section to me.

thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.—The reference to Jacob combines two events. The reference to “worshipp[ing] upon the top of his staff” comes first in Genesis. He summons Joseph and arranges his funeral back in Canaan, confessing his faith in the promise of the land.

Gen. 47:29 And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; **bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:** 30 But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and **bury me in their buryingplace.** And he said, I will do as thou hast said. 31 And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself/worshipped upon the bed’s head.

The Hebrew text says that he “bowed himself upon the bed’s head,” but “bowed” can mean “worshipped,” as the LXX translates it. The LXX also understood different vowels with the word “bed,” yielding the word “staff,” the main tool of the pilgrim. The writer may have had in mind Jacob prayer when, on returning from Haran to Canaan, he prepared to meet Esau:³⁸

Gen. 32:10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with **my staff** I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

So the end of Heb 11:21 recalls Jacob’s confession to Joseph of the promise of the land. Then he summoned Joseph to bring his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and adopts them as his sons.

Gen. 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and **let them grow into a multitude** in the midst of the earth.

This blessing recalls the promise to Abraham that he would become a great nation.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.—Finally, Joseph, like Isaac and Jacob, demonstrates a faith that is willing to make itself known to others. He commands his brethren and their descendants to take him, like Jacob before him, back to the land when God returns them there, showing his continuing faith in the promise to Abraham.

Gen. 50:24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto **the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.** 25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

Their faith goes beyond that of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah. They not only believe that God exists and rewards those who serve him (Abel and Enoch), and respond obediently to his commands (Noah, Abraham, and Sarah), but are willing to have others know of their faith. In these three examples, the others to whom they confess their faith are sympathetic. But some people who come to know of our faith may not be, leading to the final step on the ladder of faith.

38 “Staff” in MT Gen 32:10 is מקל and not מטט as in 47:31, LXX has ῥάβδος in both places.

23-31, By their Separation from Unbelievers

The final level of faith (chart) is willing to be distinct, separate, from unbelievers. This is the strongest of the four forms of faith, and the one that potentially costs us the most. The examples center around the Exodus from Egypt. Egypt was a place of idols and uncleanness:

Hos. 9:3 They shall not dwell in the LORD’S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat **unclean** things in Assyria.

The circumcision in Joshua 5 was a symbol of their deliverance from this wickedness:

Jos 5:9 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away **the reproach [shame] of Egypt** from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

The exodus was not just deliverance from slavery, but separation from a wicked and unclean culture. Isaiah picks up this theme to describe the deliverance from Babylon.³⁹

Isa 52:4 For thus saith the Lord GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. . . . 11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, **touch no unclean thing**; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

Later, Paul picks up Isaiah to exhort the Corinthians to separation from the world:

2Co 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Now the writer of Hebrews uses the events of the Exodus to encourage his readers to endure separation—both from the pagan culture of Rome, and from anti-Messianic judaism.

The examples associated with Moses fall into two sections.⁴⁰ The first contains three examples, each with an explanation of the faithful action based on what somebody saw (Table 3, chart), all entailing loss.⁴¹ We will trace a progression in the visions that inspire their faith, from the person

Intro	23 By faith	24 By faith	27 By faith
Action	Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents,	Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt:	he forsook Egypt , not fearing the wrath of the king:
Vision of Faith	because they saw ὄραω he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.	for he had respect ἀποβλέπω unto the recompence of the reward.	for he endured, as seeing ὄραω him who is invisible.
Echoes	4-6, Abel and Enoch	7-22, The Patriarchs	

Table 3: The Vision of Faith

39 See study on Isa 51:9-52:12. Three calls to the watchmen (51:9-52:6) are amplified in chiasmic order (52:7-12). The first call is full of allusions to the Exodus, leading to the call in 52:11 to leave Babylon. Isaiah contrasts the exodus from Babylon, when the people brought the vessels of the Lord previously taken from Jerusalem, with the exodus from Egypt, when the people brought the riches of Egypt (Ex 12:36), but Hebrews emphasizes that even the Exodus generation was marked by separation.

40 Thus D’Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews*. SBL Dissertation Series 42. SBL, 1979.

41 Cockerill emphasizes this contrast.

himself, to the promised reward, and then the one who called the person and who guarantees the promise. These visions trace Moses' personal progression up the ladder of faith.

The last four lack this explanation, but trace the history of the exodus from the killing of the firstborn to the entry into the promised land, and the separation of the entire nation. These examples emphasize victory. Throughout, the theme is being willing to separate from the world for the sake of God's promise.

23-27, *The Separation of Moses*

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.—Why did the parents seek to preserve Moses? As in the next two examples, they “saw” something that was not visible to ordinary sight. The word “proper” comes from the LXX of Ex 2:2 (chart).

Ex. 2:1 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. 2 And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a **goodly** child, she hid him three months.

This word appears elsewhere in the NT only in Stephen's account of Moses' birth:

Acts 7:20 In which time Moses was born, and was **exceeding fair**, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

The word “exceeding” is actually the phrase “to God,” an idiom that can indicate the superlative, but here should probably be taken literally. Stephen is emphasizing God's role in the whole account, and it would not be inappropriate for him to conclude that the parents anticipated that this child was special to God and must be preserved for that reason (see note). The book of Hebrews has much in common with Stephen's sermon,⁴² and the reference to Moses' being “proper” is probably an allusion to Stephen's claim that he was pleasing to God.

Being entrusted by God with this special gift, Moses' parents chose to disobey Pharaoh's command to kill all the Jewish baby boys. This decision was a serious one—they placed their own lives at risk. The writer cites them as his first example of those whose faith rises to the level of breaking with the comfortable way. But the vision that motivates them is one that Abel and Enoch could appreciate. It focuses on the individual and his relation to God.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;—A few verses later in Exodus, we read,

Ex. 2:10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto **Pharaoh's daughter**, and **he became her son**. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water. 11 And it came to pass in those days, **when Moses was grown**, that he **went out** unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. 12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

The references to “come to years” (the same expression as the LXX in Ex 2:11 “was grown”) and “the son of Pharaoh's daughter” show that the writer has this episode in mind. He derives Moses' refusal from the verb “went out,” which was traditionally understood to describe not just a day's visit to the slaves, but a deliberate decision to dissociate from the palace.⁴³

⁴² Manson, *Hebrews*, 1951.

⁴³ Lane cites Philo, Moses 1:33, 40, and an earlier source quoted by Eusebius.

Moses' decision reflected three choices, echoing the three priorities of Deut 6:5 and rejecting the world as defined in 1 John 2:16.⁴⁴ In refusing to accept the status of Pharaoh's daughter, he loves the Lord with all his heart, and overcomes the Pride of Life.

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;—His next choice is to reject the Lust of the Flesh. Ex 2:11 describes the “burdens” of the Israelites and their physical oppression. In leaving the palace, he chooses to love the Lord with all his soul, his life-force, rejecting the world's pleasures.

26 Esteeming the reproach of (the) Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt:—The final choice is to reject the Lust of the Eyes, and love the Lord with all his abundance. As a member of the royal family, he had access to fabulous wealth, but preferred “the reproach of the Christ,” that is, the Anointed One.

What does this phrase mean? It appears to be a reference to the last verses of Psalm 89 (88 in the LXX), the last Psalm of the Book of Desolation, which may be associated with Moses because the immediately following Psalm is attributed to him (chart).

Psa 89:50 Remember, Lord, the **reproach** of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the **reproach** of all the mighty people; 51 Wherewith thine enemies have **reproached**, O LORD; wherewith they have **reproached** the footsteps of **thine anointed**.

This Psalm recalls God's promise to David, the anointed king, and laments how God has apparently abandoned him to his enemies. The striking thing about these last two verses is how the reproach heaped upon God's anointed (according to Psa 89:20, David) is here said to rest upon “thy servants” collectively. Satan's opposition to the Messiah takes the form of opposition to all who identify with him. We know that the NT identifies our Lord with his body, the church. Here we see that the concept originates in the OT. Recall the words of the Lord in Zechariah,

Zec 2:8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

Those who oppress God's people, oppress the Lord himself. Moses knew of the promise of the Messiah. He would have learned from his mother the promise of Gen 3:15, and the Lord showed him through the stories of the patriarchs of God's care for his people and how he takes offense when they are oppressed.

for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.—The motive for his second choice, like the first, is based on seeing (ἀποβλέπω G578). But the object is different. Moses' parents were motivated by the sense of God's purpose for Moses himself. So our faith may begin with an awareness that God has his hand on us—first to call our attention to our sin, and then to open our eyes to the Savior (2 Cor 4:6). Abel and Enoch had this awareness. But as we grow in faith, our attention moves to the things that God has prepared, reminding us of Abraham and the patriarchs. When we see that those rewards are of more value than the world's wealth, our priorities change.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king:—To what episode does this refer? Two main options have been suggested.⁴⁵

44 See *The Three Choices*, <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/DoctrinalStudies/ThreeChoices/ThreeChoices.pdf>. I recorded this analysis in the margin of the Bible I used in college; I do not recall whether I heard it from someone or observed it myself.

45 Ellingworth notes a third possibility, that the reference is to Ex 11:8, “And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.” This fits well with the solution I propose.

One is that it refers to the Exodus, when he boldly led the people out of the land. There are at least two difficulties with this view.

First, the Exodus follows the death of the firstborn, which is not described until v. 28.

Second, and more importantly, whenever the OT talks about the departure from Egypt, the LXX uses the verb ἐξέρχομαι G1831, not καταλείπω G2641 (e.g., Ex 12:41; 13:3; 16:1; Num 1:1.)

If the reference is not to the Exodus, perhaps it refers to his flight to Midian in Ex 2:15. This episode fits chronologically between 11:24 as we have interpreted it and 11:28, but the difficulty is that Exodus clearly states that his flight was motivated by fear:

Ex. 2:14 And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? **And Moses feared**, and said, Surely this thing is known. 15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But **Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh**, and dwelt in the land of Midian:

But perhaps we should make more of the verb “forsake” καταλείπω G2641, which (in contrast to verbs like ἐξέρχομαι G1831) has semantic overtones that go beyond strict physical separation. The point here is that Moses not just departed, but made a mental decision to separate himself from the country. That process was not complete until he encountered the Lord at the burning bush, and resolved to return to face Pharaoh with the demand, “Let my people go.”⁴⁶ And from that point on, as he worked to disengage his kinsmen from the yoke of Egypt, indeed he was “not forsaking the wrath of the king.” The story is analogous to that of Sarah. At the outset, Sarah doubted, and Moses feared. But in the sequel, Sarah came to believe and Moses gained courage to make the break and confront Pharaoh.

for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.—In this case as in the previous two, faith is enabled by vision. Moses’ parents saw Moses and understood that he was special to God. In abandoning his royal prerogatives, Moses caught sight of the heavenly reward. In forsaking Egypt, his vision moves beyond himself and God’s gifts to the Lord himself. He approaches this vision at the burning bush Exodus 3, and it culminates with his encounter with God’s glory in Exodus 34, after which “his face shone” with the reflected glory of God.

This vision of the invisible One is what enables us to endure worldly rejection. It enabled Paul to bear testimony boldly in the face of a riotous crowd (Acts 23:11), and Stephen to endure stoning (Acts 7:55-56).

28-31, The Separation of the Nation

The next three examples trace the history of the Exodus. The rejection here is willingness to obey God in doing something that your associates may think is irrational. The examples also differ from the previous three in showing triumph rather than suffering (Cockerill), cf. 2 Ti 2:11-13.

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.—“The sprinkling of blood” refers to the marking of the houses with the blood of the passover lamb (chart):

Ex 12:7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. ... 12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and

46 Lane cites Spicq: “Spicq, 2:359, refers this verse to Moses’ courageous conversations with pharaoh during the period covered by Exod 5:1–15:21).”

against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. 13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

There were two kinds of houses in Egypt that night—those with blood on the doors, and those without. The blood showed who was willing to separate from the rest of society unto the Lord.

The Lord certainly knew, without the blood, which were the houses of the Israelites. In several previous plagues, he spared his people without any visible symbol of their identity (chart):

Ex. 8:22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. 23 And **I will put a division between my people and thy people:**

Ex. 9:4 And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and **there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel.** ... 6 And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but **of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.**

Ex 9:18 Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. ... 26 Only in the land of Goshen, **where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.**

Ex. 10:22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: 23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but **all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.**

The distinction was easy: they lived in a separate region of the country, the land of Goshen. Why did they have to mark their houses? We can think of two reasons.

The first is that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6). If the people were like any other group of the people of God, some would be professors and some would be possessors. The mere professors might say, “What’s this nonsense about sprinkling blood on my door? How will that protect me? Four previous times God has protected me, and I didn’t have to do anything. So I can ignore this messy chore.” The blood would mark out those Israelites who truly obeyed the Lord from those who were not spiritually set apart. And of course, Israelites who did not apply the blood would find their firstborn dead in the morning.

The second reason is stimulated by the observation that in the case of the hail, God made a way for the Egyptians to escape the plague:

Exo 9:18 [The Lord said:] Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. 19 [Moses says to Pharaoh:] Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. 20 **He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses:** 21 And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field.

Some Egyptians “regarded the word of the Lord.” They could not eat the passover, because they were uncircumcised, but if they were willing to mark their doors with the blood, they would be spared. They might be mocked and scorned, but like Ruth, they were ready to abandon their

homes and say to Moses, “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” By requiring the mark of blood, God makes a way for Gentiles to receive the deliverance he has prepared for his people. These may be the ones who joined Israel on their journey:

Ex. 12:37 And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. 38 And a **mixed multitude** went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.

Later, this mixed multitude caused much trouble in the camp.⁴⁷ In spite of their faith, they murmured (just as did many Israelites). Works are an important evidence of faith, but true saving faith must go beyond works.

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.—The next case of irrational faith is the crossing of the Red Sea. The obvious route would be east along the coast, but God led them south, toward the Red Sea (Figure 8, chart).

Ex. 13:17 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; ... 18 But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea:

God’s purpose was to take them to Mount Sinai, which (whatever site is proposed) lay south of Goshen,⁴⁸ then on to Kadesh-Barnea. On the way, they moved to the shores of the Red Sea, where they were hemmed in by natural obstacles, and had no obvious way forward:

Ex. 14:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. 3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, **They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.**

Again, their action seems irrational, but they obey God, leading to a great miracle.

And once again, as with Sarah in 11:11 and Moses in 11:27, “faith” did not come naturally. The people originally complained about their situation at the shore of the Red Sea:

Ex 14:10 ... behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. 11 And they said unto Moses, Because there were

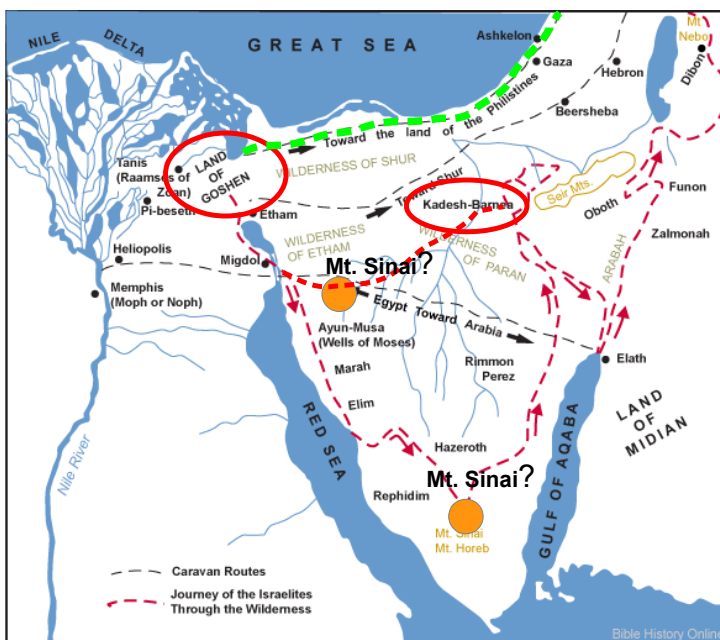


Figure 8: The Unreasonable Route of the Exodus https://www.bible-history.com/maps/route_exodus.html (modified)

47 Num 11:4 (though the Hebrew word is different); Lev 24:10

48 There are many proposals; a promising recent one favors Jebel Sin Bishar, in north-western Sinai: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabal_Sin_Bishar

no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? 12 Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. 13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. 14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

Only after Moses encouraged them could they “by faith . . . pass[] through the Red sea.” Their faith here is like that of Sarah in 11:11 and Moses himself in 11:27. The initial attitude was one of doubt and fear. Only after a time of growth does true faith develop.

The writer passes in silence over the 40 years in the wilderness, which were definitely not “by faith.” The next example he cites is after they cross Jordan into the promised land.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.— Once again, the action taken by those who act in faith appears to make no sense. The people of Jericho have heard of the miracles that accompany Israel, and are clearly afraid of the overwhelming Israelite host (chart):

Jos 2:9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

Josh. 6:1 Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

By traditional military wisdom, Israel should have done one of two things. They should either attack the city outright, or encamp around it, far enough away to avoid arrows but close enough to keep them from getting to the city’s spring,⁴⁹ and wait for them to surrender. They did neither. They put on a daily parade for six days, and after an extended display on the seventh day, they shouted. The people of Jericho certainly wondered what was going on, but the Lord brought the walls down and the city was taken.

One particularly unusual detail is the trumpets that Israel used in marching around Jericho (chart). The Israelites had two kinds of trumpet: שֹׁפָר H7782, made from a ram’s horn and sometimes called יִבֵּל H3104 “ram”), and הַצּוּצְרָה H2689.⁵⁰ They had distinctive uses.

The metal trumpets are prescribed in Numbers 10. They were in the custody of the priests (v. 8), and had three uses. First, they called the nation to assemble and set out on its journeys:

Num. 10:2 Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.

Second, they were used in case of war:

49 The major spring at Jericho lies just east of the tel, but outside the city walls. Many other ancient cities had underground tunnels accessing the spring, but none has been identified at Jericho.

50 The English word “trumpet” sometimes occurs in translating תרועה H8643, which strictly refers to the sound made by the trumpet. LXX renders both שֹׁפָר and הַצּוּצְרָה by σάλπιγξ.

Num. 10:9 And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.

Third, they were used in ceremonies in the temple (thus the name “temple trumpets”):

Num. 10:10 Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.

The trumpet of ram’s horn had a different use. It first appears in Exodus 19. The trumpet that Israel hears sounding from the top of Mount Sinai is the ram’s horn, not the metal trumpet. The next time we hear of it is in Leviticus:

Lev 25:9 Then shalt thou cause **the trumpet** of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make **the trumpet** sound throughout all your land. 10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a **jubile** unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

The ram’s horn trumpet was the symbol of the Jubilee, the great year of release. And in fact the word Jubilee in Hebrew is simply יָבֵל H3104 “ram’s horn.”

The next time we read of the ram’s horn trumpet is Joshua 6, in the conquest of Jericho.

Jos 6:4 And **seven priests shall bear** before the ark **seven trumpets of rams’ horns**: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. . . . 8 And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that **the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns** passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. 9 And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

This is unusual. Even the priests, who had custody of the silver trumpets, here blow on the ram’s horn trumpets. The symbolism of the Jubilee is unescapable:

Lev 25:10 proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof:

The conquest of Jericho, and later of the rest of the land,⁵¹ is not an act of suppression and bondage, but of setting free. This expression from Leviticus appears next in Isaiah, in the words that our Lord took to describe his mission:

Is. 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to **proclaim liberty** to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

The world thinks of the law of God as an imposition, a restriction. But they are ignorant of the bondage in which Satan holds them. Only when the Spirit of God comes into our lives, blowing the ram’s horn of spiritual conquest, can we be truly free: “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor 3:17).

51 Often to the sound of the ram’s horn trumpet, as throughout the book of Judges

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.—The final specific example epitomizes the idea of willing separation from unbelievers. Rahab confesses the Lord as the only true God, and willingly abandons her loyalty to the king and city of Jericho to cast herself upon the God of Israel.

32-38, The Consequences of Faith⁵²

The examples given so far bring us from the gates of Eden into the promised land. Faith did not end with the conquest. The writer lists further witnesses to the power of faith, then describes two consequences of their faith, with a transition in v. 35.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell—The Greek conjunctions divide the list in to three sections.⁵³ Though the first four names occur in Judges (chart), the second is not a judge, and the conjunctions suggest that this classification is not dominant.

of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson,--The first three are military heroes from Judges. Barak led the Israelite tribes against the Canaanites under Jabin in the north. Gideon delivered them from the Midianites from the east, and Samson from the Philistines, from the west.

The reference to Barak is unusual for three reasons.

1. He is never called a judge. The judge at this period was Deborah, who summoned Barak to lead the hosts of Israel against the Canaanites. The focus on the leading general rather than the recognized judge emphasizes the military theme of this group.
2. He is out of chronological order. In Judges, he is in ch. 4-5, while Gideon is in ch. 6. As a result, he is the central figure of the three, just as David is of the next triple, perhaps to emphasize that group's characteristic is military conquest rather than being a judge.
3. Like Sarah, Moses, and the nation at the Red Sea, he did not start off as an example of faith, but required considerable encouragement from Deborah to carry out his role (chart).

Judg 4:4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. ...
6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? 7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. 8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.

and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel,--The next three are all associated with the emergence of the monarchy. David, of course, was a king. Samuel was the king-maker, who initiated the monarchy and anointed both Saul and David. The story of Jephthah emphasizes how his brethren, who at first rejected him, later asked him to be their head.

52 My analysis of this section draws heavily from G.L. Cockerill, "The Better Resurrection (Heb. 11:35): A Key to the Structure and Rhetorical Purpose of Hebrews 11." *Tyndale Bulletin* 51:2 (2000), 215-234.

53 Thus Delitzsch, based on MT's insertion of τε between Barak and Sampson as well as between David and Samuel. Cf. BDF §444.2. The book of Judges names six major judges (associated with cycles that follow the pattern of Judges 2): Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. The writer chooses the last four, to whom Judges devotes more space, but substitutes the name of Barak for that of Deborah. But as the exposition shows, a person's status as judge is less important than his function in the society.

Judg 11:1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. 2 And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman. 3 Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: ... 5 And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob: 6 And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. ... 9 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, **shall I be your head?** 10 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words. 11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and **the people made him head and captain over them:** and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

Again, the order is not chronological. David, the Messianic king, is at the center.

and of the prophets:--The third group consists of the prophets.

Now he relates what faith accomplished in these and other heroes. In some cases (as in vv. 28-31) faith leads to earthly victory; in others (as in vv. 23-27), it leads to accepting loss to achieve an ultimate gain. 11:35 is a hinge between the two groups, which follow the same three broad categories as the names in v. 32 (Table 4, chart). Let's begin with the hinge.

11:32	Theme	11:33-38	
		The Victors	The Sufferers
Jephthah, David, Samuel	Political rule	33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises,	they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; ... 38 ... wandering in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.
the prophets	Life and death	stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,	37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword:
Gideon, Barak, Samson	Military success	out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.	36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:
	(Hinge)	35a Women received their dead raised to life again:	35b and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

35, Transition

35 Women received their dead raised to life Table 4: Faith in Israel's Later History

again:--The reference is probably to the ministry of Elijah and Elisha (chart).

In 1 Kings 17, God provided for Elijah during the famine by sending him to a widow of Zarephath, a coastal city half-way between Tyre and Sidon. During his time there, her only son died. The faith in focus is that of Elijah.

1 Ki 17:19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. ... 21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and **the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.**

Later, Elijah's disciple Elisha is an occasional guest in the home of a great woman of Shunem, a city of Issachar, as recorded in 2 Kings 4. Through Elisha's intercession, the Lord gives a son to

her and her husband, but then the boy dies. This time the faith in focus is hers, as she goes to fetch Elisha, who returns with her to her home.

2 Ki 4:32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. 33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD. 34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and **the flesh of the child waxed warm**. 35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and **the child opened his eyes**.

These episodes of resurrection summarize the victories of faith in vv. 33-34.

But just as the history of Moses includes deprivation (vv. 23-27) as well as triumph (28-31), so in Israel's later history faith sometimes leads to sacrifice, as in the second half of the hinge.

and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better

resurrection--The writer refers to the history in 2 Maccabees 7 of a woman whose seven sons are tortured to death by Antiochus Epiphanes. Three of the brothers express their confidence in the coming resurrection, encouraged by their mother, who is forced to watch the spectacle:

2 Mac 7:20 The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honorable memory. . . . 21 She encouraged each of them in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced her woman's reasoning with a man's courage, and said to them, 22 "I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. 23 Therefore **the Creator of the world**, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, **will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again**, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.

The resurrection that they anticipated was "better" than that of the children revived by Elijah and Elisha.⁵⁴ Those children were raised to a physical life, only to die again, but the faithful Jews of the Maccabean period looked forward to the final resurrection.

This combination of biblical and extra-biblical material at the hinge carries over into the examples of suffering. The victors are drawn from canonical scripture, while the sufferers include examples from extra-biblical Jewish literature. These other books are not cited as scripture.⁵⁵ The writer does not call them "the Scriptures" (Matt 21:42) or say "it is written" (Matt 4:4). But just as we might cite modern historical events to illustrate a biblical principle, he draws on examples known to his readers.

In fact, he may extend his examples beyond the end of the canonical books to form a transition to his readers. The canonical books end more than 500 years before the writing of Hebrews. By including these allusions, the writer is saying, "Faith not only empowered the patriarchs, and Israel at the Exodus, and during the time of the judges, and kings, and prophets. In more recent times, God's people continued to obey him even at great personal cost, and so should you."

This collection thus emphasizes that if we follow the Lord faithfully, we must expect suffering as well as victory.

54 Thus Chrysostom.

55 Compare the citation from the Testament of Moses in Jude 9, or from Enoch in Jude 14.

33-34, The Victors

The first three descriptions (Table 4) reflect the victory in the first half of v. 35. The members of the triplet are distinguished by increasing grammatical complexity.

First, we have three simple verb-object pairs. The common theme across these three is political success, the establishment of Israel as a nation ruled by God.

33 Who through faith—The prepositional phrase here (and in v. 39) serves the same function as the clause-initial dative in the individual examples.⁵⁶

subdued kingdoms,--The description fits Joshua, the Judges, Saul, and David, who conquered the city-states of Canaan and won tribute from neighboring nations to establish Israel's homeland. This item corresponds to the second group in v. 32, Jephthah, David, and Samuel.

wrought righteousness,--A nation requires not only secure territory, but also righteous rule, which was exemplified by Samuel (1 Sam 12:3-5) and David (2 Sam 8:15 "David executed judgment and justice unto all his people").

obtained promises,--Considering how the word "promise" is focused on Abraham in this chapter, the third member of the first element probably means that the establishment of the nation, both in its physical territory and its righteous rule, was in some measure a fulfillment of what God promised the patriarchs.

In the second group, the direct objects are elaborated with genitives ("of"), and the common theme is escape from death. The first two clearly recall the experience of Daniel and his friends, whom the writer includes among the prophets in v. 32.⁵⁷

stopped the mouths of lions,--The reference is to Daniel's experience in Daniel 6.

34 Quenched the violence of fire,--Here he recalls Daniel's three friends in Daniel 3.

escaped the edge of the sword,--"Elijah escaped from Jezebel (1 Kgs 19:1-3), Elisha from Jehoram (2 Kgs 6:26-32), and Jeremiah from Johoiakim (Jer 26:7-24 ...)." (Lane)

The third group modifies the verbs with prepositional phrases, and describes military victories. These descriptions recall the military leaders from the first triple in v. 32

out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.--Both Gideon and Barak are examples of leaders who started off fearful, but led Israel to dramatic victories. We have seen this with Barak (chart). When we first meet Gideon, he is hiding from the Midianites:

Jdg 6:11 And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. 13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

⁵⁶ See note on "Prepositions with πιστις."

⁵⁷ In the Jewish division of the canon (Law, Prophets, Writings, cf. Lk 24:44), Daniel is grouped with the writings and not the prophets. But in majority LXX order, it is the last of the prophets (see Goswell, JETS 52/3 (September 2009) 449-66, for details and argument that the LXX order is pre-Christian). Our writer, who consistently quotes the LXX, would have followed this order.

We see again the progression noted in Sarah, Moses, and Israel by the Red Sea. The faith of these saints was something that God gave them, often through the encouragement of their peers. These examples are an exhortation for us. If we feel weak in faith now, we should realize that God is able to produce faith in us, especially as we continue in fellowship with God's people. And if we have brethren who are weak in faith, rather than criticize them, we should encourage them.

So 33-34 are well summarized by the first half of v. 35. But the second half of the hinge reminds us that sometimes the rewards of faith are delayed, and we must endure suffering. Again we have three groups, which seem to correspond chiasmically to the groups in 33-34.

36-38, The Sufferers

Here, the first (36) and last (37b-38) groups are each one extended clause, and the central group consists of four very simple clauses.⁵⁸

36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:--Such treatment has been the lot of many of God's servants. Jeremiah is often cited. But in view of the clear reference in 35b to the Jewish heroes of the Maccabean period, it is likely that 2 Maccabees 7 continues to be in view. The context is the suppression of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria. Early in this period there was no Gideon, Barak, or Samson to bring military victory.

The next group of four simple verbs corresponds clearly to the theme of death in 33b-34, and the experience of the prophets.⁵⁹

37 They were stoned,--The only stoning of a prophet in the OT is of Zechariah the priest, in his function as a prophet (chart):⁶⁰

2Chr. 24:19 Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; ... 20 And the Spirit of God came upon **Zechariah** the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. 21 And they conspired against him, and **stoned him with stones** ...

The possible reference to Zechariah connects this chapter, which began with Abel, with our Lord's rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees,

Matt 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! ... 31 ... ye are the children of **them which killed the prophets**. ... 34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That **upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth**, from the blood of righteous **Abel** unto the blood of **Zacharias** son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. ... 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, **thou that killest the prophets**, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, ...

Many of these abuses were not from pagans, but from the temple and its hierarchy.

58 In 38, the KJV translates an adverbial participle "wandering" as a separate English sentence

59 The first two of these are mentioned in the first-century Jewish work "Lives of the Prophets," which the writer may have in mind.

60 "Lives of the Prophets" records that Jeremiah "died ... in Egypt, stoned to death by the Jews." Chrysostom suggests that he may also have in mind Stephen, who was stoned after prophesying against the Jews.

they were sawn asunder--There is no canonical reference to this, but several Jewish sources (including the Lives of the Prophets) record of Isaiah, “He met his death at the hands of Manasseh, sawn in two, ...” (per Delitzsch, in the Palestinian Targum to 2 Ki 21:16).

were tempted--Their endurance of these sufferings was not easy. Facing agonizing death, they were tempted to deny the Lord, adding to their torment.

were slain with the sword--The instance that comes to mind most immediately is the action of Jezebel, reported by Elijah, who escaped this fate (chart),

1Ki 19:10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and **slain thy prophets with the sword**; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

Similarly, Jeremiah escaped death at the hands of Jehoiakim, but Urijah was not spared:

Jer 26:20 And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah ... 23 And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, ... 24 Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

Both examples illustrate the coexistence of this suffering with the victory of v. 34, “escaped the edge of the sword” (Table 5, chart). Sometimes God allows his people to suffer; sometimes he delivers them. Both are “by faith.” Jeremiah, who escaped the edge of the sword, was not more faithful than Urijah, who was slain. It’s just that Urijah’s mission was complete, and the Lord had more for Jeremiah to do.

Monarch	34, Escaped the Edge of the Sword	37, Slain with the Sword
Jezebel: 1 Ki 19:10	Elijah	“thy prophets”
Jehoiakim: Jeremiah 26	Jeremiah	Urijah

Table 5: Contrast between 11:34 and 11:37

The last group is one sentence in Greek, emphasizing (with two different words) the theme of homelessness. It contrasts with the stable kingdom instituted by David, though the most immediate OT examples are prophets.

they wandered about περιέρχουσι G4022 in sheepskins and goatskins--Elijah’s “mantle” is regularly described in the LXX as a “goatskin” (chart):

1Kings 19:13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle [LXX “goatskin”], and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. (thus also 1 Kings 19:19; 2 Kings 2:8, 13–14)

His description as a “hairy man” in 2 Ki 1:8 probably refers to these skins (cf. Matt 3:1-4).

2Kings 1:8 And they answered him, He was **an hairy man**,⁶¹ and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah ...

being destitute, afflicted, tormented--The world does not honor or enrich those who faithfully proclaim God’s word, but abuses them and seeks to make them uncomfortable. But this treatment says more of the world than it does of them:

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy)--That is to say, they are worth more than all the world. The writer may have in mind the use of the Greek expression in Proverbs,

61 “Hairy man” describing Esau (Gen 27:11) is simply איש שער, not (as here) איש בעל שער.

Prov. 8:11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired **are not to be compared to it.**

they wandered [wandering] *πλανάω* G4105 in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.--Rejected by the world, they seek refuge in desolate places. Thus David fled when he was persecuted by Saul:

1Sam. 22:1 David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the **cave** Adullam: ... 14 And David abode in the **wilderness** in strong holds, and remained in a **mountain** in the wilderness of Ziph.

Among the prophets, we think again of Elijah, by the brook Cherith, or of the hundred prophets hidden by Obadiah “in a cave” to protect them from Jezebel (1 Ki 18:4), or of John the Baptist “in the wilderness of Judaea.”

39-40, Chapter Summary

39 And these all,--Now the writer characterizes the entire set of examples he has surveyed. This verse expounds 11:1.

having obtained a good report—

He returns to the word “report” (“witness”) with which he began the chapter, which will also link to the next chapter (Figure 9, chart).

Heb 11:2 For by it the elders **obtained a good report.** ... 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which **he obtained witness** that he was righteous, God **testifying** of his gifts: ... 5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; ... for before his translation he **had this testimony**, that he pleased God.

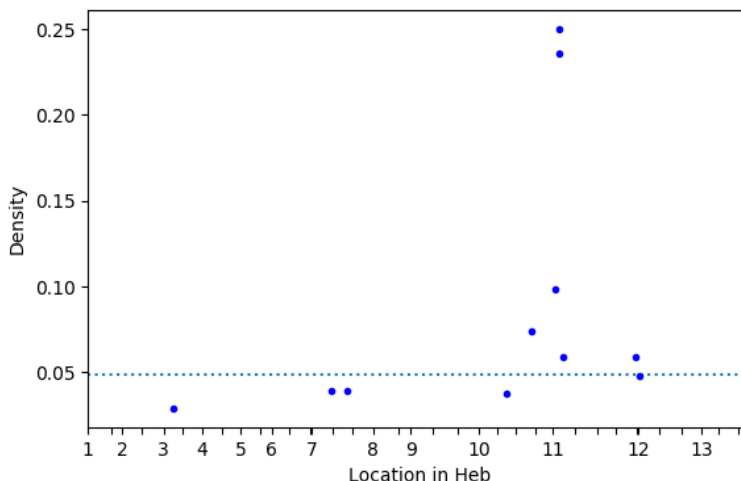


Figure 9: Words for “witness, report” μαρτυ* (G3140, G3142, G3144)

God has borne witness to them by recording them in his word.⁶²

through *δια* faith,--How is it that they were recorded in his word? It was “through faith,” as we have been reminded over and over.⁶³ Thus their faithful actions become the substance and evidence mentioned in 11:1.

That verse tells us that this substance and evidence is of blessings not yet received, and the main verb of v. 39 reminds us of this:

62 The reference to the recording of these acts of faith makes it less likely that the writer has in mind NT heroes such as John the Baptist or Stephen, whose histories may not yet have been written.

63 See note on “Prepositions with πιστις.” In Hebrews, the preposition is used when the modifier is clause-medial, the simple dative in initial positions.

received κομίζω G2865 not the promise:--Recall that “promise” (Figure 4, chart) is overwhelmingly associated with Abraham and the patriarchs. When we studied this expression in the NT some years ago,⁶⁴ we saw that the focus is on the coming of the Messiah. The saints who receive witness in the pages of the OT did not receive the promise. They did not live to see the coming of the promised Messiah.

This verse and 11:13 “not having received λαμβάνω the promises” present an interesting contrast with 6:15 “And so, after he [Abraham] had patiently endured, he obtained ἐπιτυγχάνω the promise.” If we carefully observe the three expressions, we can resolve the tension (chart).

Heb. 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, **he obtained ἐπιτυγχάνω G2013 the promise.**

Heb. 11:13 **These all** died in faith, **not having received λαμβάνω G2983 the promises**, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,

Heb. 11:39 And **these all**, having obtained a good report through faith, **received κομίζω G2865 not the promise:**

We have three different verbs, and two contrasts in the subjects and objects.

Start with the subjects. 6:15 speaks only of Abraham, not of “these all,” the company of the faithful. It is describing some experience that he had that was not provided to the others.

Next, note the objects of the verbs. All three speak of promise, but the second one speaks of the entire set of promises (plural) to Abraham, while the other two focus on the (Messianic) promise (singular). So 11:13 is removed from the tension. Nobody, not even Abraham, received the promises (singular). Even he had to purchase land that had been promised to him, to bury Sarah.

To distinguish 6:15 and 11:39, we focus on the verbs. The second is very common in the NT, but the first and third are relatively rare in the NT,⁶⁵ suggesting that they have been carefully chosen.

The verb in 6:15 can describe a meeting between two people.⁶⁶ When we studied 6:15, we explained it as Abraham’s meeting with Melchizedek, whom the writer introduced in 5:10 and to whom he returns in 7:1 after digressing in ch. 6. In Melchizedek, he indeed “met the Promise.”

The verb in 11:39 appears previously in Hebrews, and in particular at the start of this section, with the same object.⁶⁷

Heb 10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.
36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might **receive κομίζω the promise.** 37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

In 10:36, even the writer’s contemporaries have not yet received the promise in the sense spoken of here, so we should not be surprised to learn that the OT faithful were in a similar condition. But this verse also tells us when they (and we) will enter into this blessing. The following quotation in 10:37 is from two OT passages, both describing the future Day of the Lord.

64 <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/christmas/notes/Christmas11ThePromise.pdf>

65 5x and 11x respectively, with 1 and 3 references in Hebrews, respectively

66 BDAG does not recognize this meaning, which in the NT is more common with the simple τυγχάνω G5177, but L&S documents it thoroughly in other Greek literature (see note), and given the hellinistic orientation of the writer of Hebrews, we should not be surprised to find the meaning here.

67 Thus Barmby. κομίζω occurs only 11x in the NT, of which 3 are in Hebrews (10:36; 11:19, 39).

The phrase “yet a little while” takes us to Isaiah 26,

Is. 26:20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were **for a little moment**, until the indignation be overpast. 21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. 27:1 In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent;

“He that shall come will come” is from Habakkuk, describing the Babylonian invasion, which the writer takes as emblematic of the consummation.

Hab. 2:3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; **because it will surely come, it will not tarry.**

The reference in 11:39 is not to an anticipatory experience, such as Abraham had with Melchizedek, but to the Day of the Lord, when the Promise, the royal Messiah, arrives in all his glory. Until then, neither Abraham, nor the OT saints, nor we will “receive” the promise as anticipated in 10:37 and 11:39.

The writer now explains this delay with two modifying clauses.⁶⁸

40 God having provided [planned] some better thing for us,--The first clause is circumstantial,⁶⁹ giving the context of the delay. It helps to understand “provide” προβλέπω G4265 in its etymological sense, “to see beforehand, plan.” He does not mean that God has already given us something they did not have, but rather that he has made a plan for “something better” for us to enjoy. The word “better” κρείττων G2909 is a favorite of Hebrews, appearing 13x out of 20 in the entire NT. Like the expression “the promise,” the word “better” points to the Lord Jesus (chart). He is better than the angels (1:4); Melchizedek, representing him, is better than Abraham (7:7); he brings us a better hope (7:19) and is the surety (7:22) and mediator (8:6) of a better covenant mediated by better blood (12:24), providing for us a better possession (10:34) in our better, heavenly country (11:16), which we enter through a better resurrection (11:35). Like “the promise,” “better” points us toward the Lord Jesus, and given the parallel in 10:36, we should think here of the “better hope” of his return. The circumstances of the delay were, and are, God’s plan of a messianic blessing to encompass us as well as them.

that they without us should not be made perfect.--The second clause moves from circumstance to purpose. God intends that his saints should all be perfected together. Just as we are to tarry one for another at the Lord’s table (1 Cor 11:33), God has ordained that the saints who have gone before should wait for those who would come after.

When I was a boy, Christmas morning was a magical time. We were four siblings, but we were not allowed to run to the tree the moment we woke up and start unwrapping our presents. Instead, we all got up and got ready, and lined up at the door to the living room. When all of us were there, Mom and Dad opened the door, and together we went in to enjoy our gifts.

That’s how God has arranged for the arrival of the Promise. None of his people will enter into that blessing until all are ready.

Soon after the resurrection, Peter urged the Jews to believe, to bring the promised day:

68 By Hollenbach’s subordination constraint, *START*, Dec 1985, pp. 1-16, both the participle and the purpose clause of v. 40 modify “received not.” Leedy’s diagram has it correct, while Koivisto has it wrong.

69 Strictly, it is a genitive absolute.

Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, **when in order that** the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

The process took longer than he expected, and later Peter uses this principle to explain why.

2Pet. 3:3 ... there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? ... 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is **longsuffering** to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The “us” here, contrasting with the “them” he uses earlier in 2 Peter 3, refers to the elect. God is waiting for all of the elect to be saved. Because of this, he goes on to exhort us,

2Pet. 3:12 Looking for and **hasting unto [hastening]** the coming of the day of God,

The Lord is waiting for all of the elect to be saved. When that day comes, he will return. Thus we may actually participate in hastening that day by doing all we can to win the lost to our Lord.

12:1-17, Exhortation to Patience

Hebrews 10:32-39 summarized the two themes of example and exhortation that ch. 11-12 develop in more detail (Figure 5, chart). Having detailed the examples in ch. 11, the writer now moves to the exhortation, with two features from the end of ch. 10 that we have not seen in ch. 11: imperatives (Figure 3) and the word family for patience and endurance (Figure 4).

The section from 12:1-17 falls into parts (Figure 10). First the writer presents our Lord as the final example of faith, under the metaphor of a foot-racer. Then he exhorts us to direct our attention to the Lord, and then to one another.

- 12:1-17, Exhortation (imperative)
- 1-2, The final witness
 - 3-11, Consider Jesus
 - 12-17, Consider one another
 - 12-13, Encourage the Weak
 - 14-17, Watch for Apostates

1-2, Jesus, the Final Witness

Figure 10: Structure of 12:1-17

These two verses develop the metaphor of the life of faith as an athletic contest, a common figure in the NT. For example, Paul writes to the Corinthians (chart),⁷⁰

1 Cor 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a **race** run all, but one receiveth the **prize**? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible **crown**; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

And shortly before his death, he compares his life not only to a race, but also to a fight, another event in the ancient games:

2 Tim 4:7 I have fought a good **fight**, I have finished my **course**, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a **crown** of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous **judge**, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

⁷⁰ See also Phil 2:16; 3:13-14; Ac 20:24. Ga 2:2; 5:7; 2 Ti 2:5; 4:7, 8

A footrace has several features that the NT writers exploit to explain the Christian life.

- It requires exertion and discipline.
- It is organized under certain rules.
- There is a judge to be sure the contestants follow the rules.
- There is a goal in view, a finish line.
- A prize is available, but not all who run will obtain it.
- Spectators watch the contest.

12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,--“Witnesses” μάρτυς G3144 is cognate to the words for “testify, report” μαρτυρ* (G3140, G3142, G3144) in 11:1-5 and 39, and refers to the faithful from ch. 11.

With the metaphor of the race that permeates these verses, the witnesses certainly reflect the spectators. But given the use of this word family in ch. 11, they are more than that:⁷¹ they are prior athletes who have run well before us, and whose examples should encourage us. We are not performing before couch potatoes, but before the winners of previous Olympics. As 11:1 told us at the outset, their faith is the evidence and substance that sustains ours.

let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,--The “weight” and “sin” mentioned in this verse draw on the metaphor of the footrace. The warning against “sin” reflects the rules of a contest.

2Ti 2:5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive **lawfully**.

But it is not enough to follow the rules. The race is competitive. Not all who run will win, so runners discipline themselves to avoid unnecessary cumbrances:

1Co 9:25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is **temperate** in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

A race also has a finish line, and a prize. A successful runner must not be distracted with the landscape, the spectators, or the other runners. He must keep his eyes on the goal:

Phil. 3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, **forgetting** those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I **press toward the mark** for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

So our writer exhorts us,

2 Looking unto—The verb is literally “looking off” (into the distance) or “looking away” (from other things around us). Both meanings may be involved. Recall the principles in Phil 3:13-14. Paul says that he forgets the distractions. He “looks away” from things that might slow him down. At the same time, he keeps his eyes on goal, “looking off” toward the finish line.

The metaphor leads us to expect that what we look off to is the goal, but instead it is a person:

Looking unto Jesus the author ἀρχηγός and finisher⁷² τελειωτής G5051 of our faith;--Note first that “our” is in italics.⁷³ Throughout the past chapter, the focus has not been on our faith, but on faith as demonstrated by the saints who have gone before, the faith that forms the substance for our hope. Now our Lord is presented as the supreme example of faith.

71 See Bruce. The sense “observer” is possible, 1 Tim 6:12, but the active sense is more consistent with ch. 11.

72 N. C. Croy, ‘A Note on Hebrews 12:2’, JBL 114 (1995), 117–119

73 The statement in the KJV translation is true (Phil 1:6), but not the best translation of the Greek here.

In the metaphor of the race, those who have gone before have run the race before us, but they have not yet received the prize: “they without us should not be made perfect” (11:40). There is one exception. “Finisher” belongs to the same family of words as “perfect, mature.” In the light of 11:40, we should understand the verse to say that though we, and the OT saints, have not yet reached the finish line, he has “finished” the race of faith.⁷⁴

Similarly, in the context of the race metaphor, “author” means “leader.” This is in fact how the term is used in 2:10, where the KJV translates it “captain” (chart):

Heb. 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the **captain ἀρχηγός G747** of their salvation **perfect τελειώω G5048** through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:10 speaks not only of our Lord as the leader, but also of his perfection, using a cognate to “finisher” in 12:2. This same idea of our Lord’s completion of the course comes up again a few chapters later:

Heb. 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 And **being made perfect**, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Recall the race metaphor. We should look away from every distraction, and fix our eyes on the mark (Phil 3:14), the goal. But if you’re not a very good runner, and the goal is far away, it may be hard to see. In that case, maybe you can find the runner who is at the head of the pack—the leader, and follow him. And in the case of our Lord Jesus, that’s an especially good idea, because he not only is the frontrunner in the race of faith, but he has successfully completed it.

Numerous parallels across these three verses (Table 6) help us understand 12:2.

	12:2	2:9-10	5:8-9
Leader in the experience of faith	Looking unto Jesus the author ἀρχηγός G747	10c to make the captain ἀρχηγός of their salvation	8b yet learned he obedience
One who finished the race	and finisher τελειωτής G5051 of our faith;	10d perfect τελειώω G5048	9a And being made perfect τελειώω,
His prize	for the joy that was set before him	10b in bringing many sons unto glory,	9b he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;
His suffering	endured the cross, despising the shame,	10e through sufferings.	8c by the things which he suffered;
His exaltation	and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.	9 But we see Jesus, ... for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; ...	

Table 6: Parallels to Heb 12:2

who for the joy that was set before him—This phrase is the second instance of the verb “set before” πρόκειμαι G4295. The first, in v. 1, referred to “the race.” It was customary in the ancient games to announce two things: the contest itself, and the prize to be awarded the competitors.⁷⁵ Our Lord, in running the race of faith, had a prize in mind. But what was it?

74 See note on τέλος and cognates in Hebrews

75 Thus Liddell-Scott πρόκειμαι meaning 3, “to be set before competitors, as the prize of a contest.”

This joy, the prize for finishing the race, may not be the same as his exaltation to the Father's right hand, at the end of the verse. Think of the awards at the Olympics: the winner is exalted by stepping to the top step of the award platform, but also receives the prize, the medal (chart). And the parallels of 2:10 and 5:9 suggest another option, which is borne out by other passages of Scripture. Consider the prophecy of our Lord's redemptive work in Isaiah:

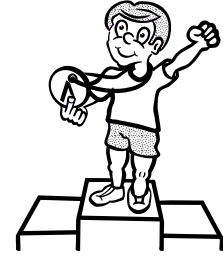


Figure 11: Prize vs. Podium

Is. 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see **his seed**, he shall prolong his days, and the **pleasure of the LORD** shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant **justify many**; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Compare also Psalm 16, which Peter in Acts 2 understands as spoken by the Messiah.

Psa. 16:2 O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; 3 But to **the saints** that are in the earth, and to **the excellent, in whom is all my delight**.

The Messiah's delight is in the saints.⁷⁶ It's likely that we are meant to understand the prize for which he entered the contest as the saints whom his suffering redeemed.⁷⁷

endured the cross,--This race is a marathon, not a 100 yard dash. The verb ὑπομένω G5178 is cognate to "patience" ὑπομονή G5281 in v. 1. The Lord kept putting one foot ahead of the other, even though the circumstances were uncomfortable.

despising the shame,--"Despise" καταφρονέω G2706 means not that he intensely disliked the shame that his adversaries heaped on him, but that he looked down on it as of no importance. The rejection from his adversaries might have been a distracting, causing him to break his pace, but he "looked away" from it, keeping the goal in mind.

and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.--If the joy at the salvation of his saints is the prize, the throne of God is the award podium.

3-11, Consider Jesus

The exhortation in 12:2 to fix our attention on the Lord is fairly indirect, a participle modifying the cohortative subjunctive "let us run." Now he makes it a direct command.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.--Whenever we are tempted to be discouraged, we should recall the depth of rejection that the Lord faced. "Contradiction" means that nobody agreed with him. In our current culture, people are desperately afraid of being rejected, of being different.

76 Isaiah 53 and Psalm 16 speak of עֲפָרָה, whose Gk reflexes are βουλή or θελημα, not χάρα, which rather translates שִׁוּי or שִׁמְחָה. So the connection here is thematic, not verbal.

77 Alford cites Theodoret to this effect; this is Gill's second option, and also supported by Boatman in the College Press commentary. This insight emphasizes another parallel with 2:9-10 and 5:8-9. In those passages, we connected "perfect" with priestly consecration, filling the hands so that our Lord could bring the required sacrifice to the Father for the salvation of his people (2:9-10 "bringing many sons to glory, 2:17 "that he might be a ... high priest ... to make reconciliation for the sins of the people"), while 5:8 connects his perfection with becoming "the author of eternal salvation. Perhaps "finisher" in 12:2 picks up this notion as well. See note.

The crowds that welcomed the Lord on Palm Sunday melted away by Good Friday. They would not dare to stand against the opinion of the Big People.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.--However much the Roman disciples had suffered, it had not yet come to the point of martyrdom.

So we should consider the Lord. When we do, we ask why a righteous man should suffer. The answer lies in his title of Son (recall 1:1-2). He is the Son of God, and that title brings to the writer's mind a principle from Proverbs that explains our Lord's suffering, and invites us to generalize it to ourselves. Note the repetition of "son" in the proverb and introduction:

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children sons, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.⁷⁸

[Prov 3:11-12]--One characteristic shared by every son is chastening. Since our Lord is God's son, it is not surprising that he experienced suffering. In one of the parallels to v. 2 that we have already considered (Table 6), this suffering was stated as a surprise:

Heb. 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; 8 **Though** he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

But Solomon speaks not just of the Son, but of "every son." Prov 3:11-12 turns the "though" of Heb 5:8 into "because." It explains our Lord's suffering, but also alerts us, as the sons of God, to expect suffering as well.

Now he expounds the two words "every son," starting with "son."

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?--According to Proverbs, chastening is a sign of sonship. So if the Roman disciples experience suffering, they should take it as God's loving discipline toward them.

Next, he directs our attention to "every."

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.--Since all sons experience chastening, people without it are illegitimate.

So far, the focus has been on suffering as a characteristic of sons. But if we are God's sons, that makes him our Father, and suggests the appropriate attitude we should have toward him. The next two verses set forth two contrasts between earthly and heavenly chastisement, the second amplifying the first.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?--

The first contrast is between "fathers of our flesh" and "the Father of spirits." Earthly fathers give us fleshly bodies, and their discipline can only reach our flesh. Careful training can modify any aspect of a child's outward behavior—or a dog's. God promises this (chart):

⁷⁸ The Hebrew avoids making us sons of God, a designation that the OT does not apply to individuals: וְיִכָּאֵב אֶת־בְּנֵי וְיִרְצֶה, "as a father does the son of his pleasure." LXX apparently reads כאב as a Piel (otherwise unattested) of a verb meaning "to be in pain." The writer of Hebrews has no problem with the resulting description of believers as sons of God, in the light of the clear NT revelation of our sonship to the Father, a relation accomplished for us by our Lord: Eph 1:5 (see notes on that passage).

Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

But godly parents see the need in the child’s spirit, and recognize their impotence to modify it. They go repeatedly to their knees, for only “the Father of spirits,” the one who creates all spiritual life, can provide discipline that can change the spirit. Compare Job’s consciousness of his children’s sin, for which he had to turn to God:

Job 1:5 And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

The “for” at the start of the next verse further explains this difference between human and divine discipline. Chastening by a human parent has two limitations, contrasted with God’s chastening (Table 7, chart).

For they verily for a few days chastened us	↑	that we might be partakers of his holiness.
after their own pleasure;	↓	but he for our profit,

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us—The first limitation of human chastisement is its *duration*, “for a few days.” This limitation can have three sources:

Table 7: Human and divine chastening in 12:10

- a. Human parents are easily distracted. Some stubborn children are more patient than their parents, and learn to outwait them.
- b. Even if a parent is diligent, eventually a child grows up and moves out of the parent’s home, beyond the parent’s ability to chasten.
- c. Usually, parents die before their children, and some lessons are not complete by that time.

after their own pleasure;--The second limitation is that human chastisement is *uncertain*. The verb translated “after their pleasure” is not saying that they were acting selfishly, but rather emphasizing that they had only a subjective impression of what would be best for us. They did what seemed best to them, but often without firm knowledge.

The chastisement we receive from our heavenly Father has neither of these shortcomings. The writer explains the contrasts in reverse order.

but he for our profit,--A human parent, at best, does what he thinks will help the child, but he cannot be sure. God always has our benefit in mind:

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

that we might be partakers of his holiness.--The ultimate purpose is to bring us into conformity with the likeness of the Lord Jesus—to make us godly, in a profound and mysterious sense, as Peter observes:

2Pe 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.⁷⁹

Unlike temporary human chastisement (12:10), “his holiness” lasts forever.

⁷⁹ κοινωνός rather than μεταλαμβάνω in 12:10, but note the close semantic relation of κ. with μετέχω in 2:14, and cf. Lk 5:7, 10. See notes.

So we should first consider the Lord, the suffering that he endured as a Son, and what that tells us about God's chastisement of all his sons, including us. The last verse of this section summarizes both the pain of chastening and its joyful results.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous:--The difficult lesson of this chapter, and indeed of the entire book, is that our expectation is not immediate and uninterrupted pleasure. Bad things will happen to us, things that bring grief. But these are not the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (Hamlet, 3.1). Rather, they are the deliberate acts of a loving heavenly Father, seeking to benefit us. The rest of that verse spells out that benefit. Note two contrasts between the half verses.

nevertheless afterward—The first contrast is with "for the present." The disciple must be willing to suffer present discomfort for future benefit.

it yieldeth the peaceable fruit—The second contrast, with "grievous," is God's peace.

of righteousness—What does "fruit of righteousness" mean? What relation does "of" convey?

The word "of" can be used in many different ways in NT Greek.⁸⁰ Contrast the usage here with a superficially similar phrase in Galatians 5, "the fruit of the Spirit" (chart). The phrase in Galatians 5 is a genitive of source: the Spirit is the source of the fruit, which consists of love, joy, peace, and the other virtues. Compare Gen 3:3, "the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden." The Spirit is like the tree, which bears the fruit. "Fruit of the Spirit" means that the fruit comes from the Spirit, just as "fruit of the tree" means fruit that comes from the tree. One clue to recognizing this construction is that the writer goes on to define what the fruit is.

In our case, we have already been told the source: it is chastening, which yields the fruit. So it doesn't make sense to think of righteousness as the source that produces fruit. Rather, the fruit *is* righteousness. Heb 12:10 has already told us that the objective of chastening is "that we might be partakers of his holiness." This use of "of" is called a "genitive of apposition." It gives another name for something, as though we were to say, "the fruit, that is, righteousness. Other examples of this construction are "the sign of circumcision" (Rom 4:11), meaning "the sign, that is, circumcision," and "the sin of witchcraft" (1 Sam 15:23), meaning "the sin, specifically, witchcraft." The fruit that chastening yields is righteousness—practical righteousness, conduct that conforms to the will of God, the "holiness" of 12:10.

unto them which are exercised thereby.--This fruit comes only to those who participate in the chastisement. The point is not just experiencing suffering. "Exercised" refers to what one does in a gym. Consider bearing a heavy burden. When the Israelites did it under the Egyptian taskmasters, it harmed them. When we do it in a gym under a trainer, it builds up the body. The point is not just that we suffer, but that we recognize the suffering as God's loving provision for us, and seek to learn the lessons he is teaching.

The combination of "peace" and "righteousness" characterizes the Messianic kingdom (chart):

Psa. 72:7 (LXX) In his days shall **righteousness** spring up; and abundance of **peace** till the moon be removed.

Is. 9:7 Of the increase of his government and **peace** there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with **justice** [**righteousness**] from henceforth even for ever.

⁸⁰ Wallace (p. 72) names 29 different uses, and some additional special cases

Is. 32:17 And the work of **righteousness** shall be **peace**; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

In fact, these are the first two characteristics of the kingdom of God in Paul’s mind:

Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but **righteousness**, and **peace**, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

But throughout the Bible, this kingdom comes only after severe opposition by the wicked. Our writer wants us to understand that this sequence is not accidental, but part of the divine purpose, to lead us to the obedience to him that alone can bring true peace:

Is. 48:18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy **peace** been as a river, and thy **righteousness** as the waves of the sea:

12-17, Consider One Another

The imperatives in 12-13 are the first since v. 3, “consider Jesus.” They direct our attention to the body of Christ, other believers.

This division has two sections with parallel structure (imperatives, followed by one or more instances of “lest”). Each is founded on an extended OT passage, and each amplifies a principle from our Lord’s church discourse in Matthew 18 (chart, Table 8).

	12:12-13, Encourage the Weak	12:14-17, Watch for Apostates
Imperative(s)	12 Lift up hands ... knees 13 Make straight paths ...	14 Follow peace ... holiness 15 Looking diligently ...
“Lest”	Lest that which is lame be turned ...	15 lest any man fail ... 16 lest any root of bitterness ... 16 lest there be any fornicator ...
Old Testament	Isaiah 35 (encouragement after Babylon)	Deuteronomy 29 (warning against apostasy)
Matthew 18	18:12-13 The Wayward Lamb	18:15-17 The Persistent Rebel

Table 8: Two Exhortations in Considering One Another

12-13, Encourage the Weak (based on Isaiah 35; cf. Matt 18:12-14)

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;--This exhortation is from Isaiah’s prophecy of encouragement to the captives in Babylon:

Is. 35:3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.⁸¹

When a NT writer alludes to a verse, he often intends the reader to remember the context. The flow of thought in Isaiah includes four elements, all echoed in our chapter (Table 9, chart).⁸²

1. The preceding context describes God’s chastisement on his people.

81 Dave Nelson draws my attention also to Job 4:3-4, which emphasize that the help required for both hands and knees comes through appropriate speech.

82 Anita Parunak suggested the broader parallels between Hebrews 12 and Isaiah 35.

Theme	Isaiah	Hebrews 12
Chastisement	ch. 28-33 six woes, mostly on Israel	vv. 5-11
Encourage the lame	35:3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.	12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees
Expect healing	35:6 Then shall the lame man leap as an hart	13b lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.
A helpful highway	35:8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: • the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. • 9 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, 	13a And make straight paths for your feet, ← Prov 4:26 (LXX)

Table 9: Echoes of Isaiah in Hebrews 12

2. But in the light of his promised deliverance, the people are to encourage one another (under the metaphor of helping a lame person).
3. In fact, the lame will be healed,
4. and their journey will be aided by a highway that smooths out the bumps for them. Three aspects of this highway are emphasized: it is free from *pollution*, *confusion*, and *predation*. The second characteristic is particularly appropriate to the lame.

Who builds this wonderful highway? Isaiah 35 does not tell us, but three later passages in Isaiah describe God’s people as building the highway by which God saves his people (chart):

Is. 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, **Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway** for our God.

As the gospels apply 40:3 to John the Baptist, the responsibility of the people to “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” was a call for people to open up the way for the Lord to come. We saw in our study of 11:40 that the Lord’s return is being delayed until all of the elect is saved, and that we are called upon to hasten it by preaching the gospel. But two other passages in Isaiah speak of our preparing the way for the people to return to Zion:

Is. 57:13 he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; 14 And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, **prepare the way**, take up the **stumblingblock** out of the way of my people.

Is. 62:10 Go through, go through the gates; **prepare ye the way** of the people; cast up, cast up the **highway**; gather out the **stones**; lift up a standard for the peoples.

Our writer wants to emphasize our responsibility in this preparation, and his mind is drawn to the LXX of Proverbs 4, The LXX says, “Make straight paths for your feet.” The Hebrew reads,

Prov. 4:26 Ponder the path of thy feet,⁸³ and let all thy ways be established.

83 The root of פלל is disputed. Most commentators (including K&D) go with the LXX, though Waltke argues for the root behind the KJV based on 5:6, 16. But if Waltke is correct, LXX may discern a metonymy of the cause: one ponders the path ahead in order to see to it that they are established פלל, made firm and stable.

Note change from singular to plural, and the understanding of the verb as metonymy of the cause (ponder in order to make straight).

This passage tells us to help those who are weak by clearing a highway through the obstacles, to reduce the stress on them. We reflect this principle in the Americans with Disabilities Act, which sets architectural standards to be sure that people in wheelchairs can make their way around. The writer urges the Roman assembly to adopt a “saints with disabilities policy,” to recognize one another’s weaknesses and be careful not to lead them into sin. In Paul’s epistles, this principle takes the form of exhortations not to put a stumblingblock before your brother (alluding to Isa 57:13). He gives us a case study in 1 Corinthians 8 (chart):⁸⁴

1 Cor 8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. 5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) 6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. 7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a **stumblingblock** to them that are weak. 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Romans 14 sets forth the same principle:

Rom 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a **stumblingblock** or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

So the first imperative in considering the brethren is to encourage those who are at special risk of falling into sin, adapting our behavior if necessary to avoid tempting them. The local assembly should be a highway through the desert to the promised land, free from the *pollution* of the unclean and any *confusion* that might trip up the lame, and protecting the saints from the *predation* of the wolves about whom our Lord (Matt 7:15) and Paul (Acts 20:29) warned us.

14-17, Watch Out for Apostates (based on Deut 29; cf. Matt. 18:15-17))

The first exhortation urges us to remove stumblingblocks so that young believers are safe. Sometimes dealing with those obstacles requires more than individual self-control, and the more mature disciples may need to exhort those who are causing a problem.

14 Follow διώκω G1377 peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:--Our ultimate objective is peace *and* holiness in the fellowship. The conjunction is important. Some groups pursue peace at the expense of holiness, compromising God’s standards in order not to ruffle feathers. But the Lord wants both. The word “which” is singular and agrees with “holiness.” We might paraphrase, “pursue peace with all men, but whatever you do, pursue holiness, because without holiness you cannot see the Lord.”

⁸⁴ See also Rom 14:1-8, which probably reflects a similar scenario, abstaining from meat to avoid idols.

The verb “follow after” in English may suggest a leisurely activity, but the Greek verb has the sense of urgency, moving with speed and diligence to pursue something that may escape you (Brenton on Ps 34:14). This exhortation carries with it a sense of special urgency.

Like the first imperative, this one also rests on the OT (chart):

Psa. 34:14 LXX Depart from evil, and do good; seek **peace**, and **pursue διώκω G1377** it. 15
The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

In addition to peace, the Psalm recognizes the importance of holiness in both the exhortation to “depart from evil,” and its commendation of the righteous.

The previous exhortation led us to the danger of stumblingblocks, a theme discussed elsewhere in the NT in Romans 14. That discussion goes on to a verse that echoes the phrasing of Heb 12:13 and Ps 34:14:

Rom 14:19 Let us therefore **follow after διώκω G1377** the things which make for **peace**, and things wherewith one may edify another.⁸⁵

Again, peace alone is not the objective, but edification, helping each other become like the Lord Jesus. The first exhortation dealt with the need to help weak members of the assembly not to fall away. Caring for them will require the sacrifice of some individual liberties, and that can lead to tension and strife. In addition to considering the weak and how to help them, we must also be aware of dangers posed by those who may lead them astray.

15 Looking diligently ἐπισκοπέω G1983—This is the verb form of the word translated “bishop” or “overseer.” It appears elsewhere in the NT only at 1 Pet 5:2, with reference to the responsibility of the older brethren to watch out for the younger ones:

1Pet. 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, **taking the oversight** thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Here, the writer anticipates that all of the saints share this responsibility toward each other.

The three “lest” statements make clear the danger for which oversight is necessary. They are derived from Moses’ exhortation to the nation in Deuteronomy 29 (chart, Table 10). In Deuteronomy, these build on one another to describe the same person or group, and so we should perhaps understand them here, as different characteristics of a single person.

lest any man fail of the grace of God;--The first characteristic for which we must be alert is that someone “misses out on” God’s grace (BDAG for ὑστερέω ἀπό; see note). What a tragedy it would be if someone who is associated with the assembly is lured away to his eternal loss, “missing out on the grace of God.” Similarly, in Deuteronomy, Moses warned the people not to abandon the privileges of the covenant of the Lord to serve other gods.

In the context that we have reconstructed for Hebrews, this warning concerns someone in the assembly who decides to abandon the teachings of the Lord Jesus and go back to Judaism. Such a person would miss out on the grace of God. Paul gives a similar warning to those in the Galatian church who sought justification by keeping the Jewish law (Gal 5:4).

85 A parallel with Rom 12:18, which considers peace with all people and not just in the assembly, is also possible, but less likely because of the phrasing and the continuity with vv. 12=13.

Theme	Deuteronomy 29	Hebrews 12
Apostasy	18a Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations;	15b lest any man fail of [from] the grace of God (Gal. 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.)
Spreading Bitterness	18b lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;	lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled
Loss of Blessing	19 And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: 20 The LORD will not spare him , but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.	16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Table 10: Echoes of Deuteronomy 29 in Heb 12:15-17

Elsewhere in Deuteronomy, Moses declares severe penalties on someone who turns away from the Lord, whether an individual (Deut 17:2-5) or a city (Deut 13:12-17). There, he explains these penalties for apostasy. He is concerned that people like this may turn others aside from following the Lord. The second instance of “lest” in Deuteronomy 29 spells this out explicitly, describing the person as a root that can propagate bitterness. This verse is the source for Heb 12:15b,

lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;--Some plants are easily propagated by their roots. If you get a piece of the root and plant it in the ground, though it is invisible, it will sprout up into the plant. If the church tolerates those who have rejected the Lord’s teaching (in this case, Judaizers), it risks having that false teaching spread through the group.

Deuteronomy 29 goes on to describe the same person or group who in 29:18 turned away from the Lord. They may presume upon the grace of God. Perhaps they are relying on God’s gracious covenant promises, or the sacrifices he has provided to deal with sin. But this presumption is not justified. “The Lord will not spare him.”

Echoing this warning, the writer recalls an example of someone in the OT who lightly discarded God’s covenant, only to find himself without recourse.

16 Lest there be any fornicator,⁸⁶ or profane person,--Our writer uses these terms to characterize Esau’s disregard for his birthright. Let’s consider each of them.

fornicator--The OT does not describe Esau as sexually impure; he committed polygamy with pagan wives after the events in view here. The focus is rather on how he sold something that is too sacred to be sold (as does a prostitute, a πόρνη). Esau’s faithlessness is spiritual more than physical, using a metaphor common in the OT prophets (cf. Ezekiel 16). Recall the parallel with Deuteronomy 29: this is someone who has “turned away from the Lord” (29:18, ἐκκλίνω G1578) as a man might do with a prostitute (Gen 38:16; Prov 7:25)

86 In 1 Corinthians 5, fornication is grounds for church discipline.

profane person--A profane person is one who does not have access to spiritual things, and Esau, in despising the Abrahamic Promise, has excluded himself from the people of promise.

as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.--Esau is an example of someone who has “missed out on” the grace of God (Heb 12:15) and “turned away from the Lord” (Deut 29:18). As Isaac’s firstborn, Esau was in line to inherit the Abrahamic blessing. By order of birth, the line of privilege should be “Abraham, Isaac, and Esau.” But as recorded in Gen 25:31-34, he sold his birthright to Jacob for a plate of lentil stew. So now we remember “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” and Esau is associated throughout the OT with Moab and Ammon, Lot’s impure offspring by his daughters, as the perennial enemies of Israel and worshippers of other gods.

Jacob was wrong to demand the birthright in exchange for food for his hungry brother, and even more wrong to deceive his father in order to secure the blessing. But the focus here is on Esau’s attitude. He did not value the Promise, and now some in the church in Rome, advocating a return to the synagogue, are not valuing the fulfillment of the Promise, the distinctive salvation that our Lord has purchased for us. By contrast, Jacob, for all his deceitfulness, valued the blessing.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected:--In Gen 27:31-34, Esau comes to his father Isaac to receive the blessing, only to learn that Jacob has already taken it. It meant nothing to him when he was hungry, but now that someone else values it, he desperately wants to possess it (a common phenomenon with young children). He pleads urgently that his father would bless him as well, as the last clause of our verse states:⁸⁷

though he sought it carefully with tears.--“It” refers to the blessing, according to Genesis (chart):⁸⁸

Gen. 27:38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

But in spite of his emotional fervor, he was unsuccessful. Isaac recognizes that God’s will has been achieved, even through Esau’s veniality and Jacob’s deception—God does indeed cause “the wrath of men to praise him,” Ps 76:10.

for he found no place of repentance,--The repentance in view is by Esau himself. We might say, “he could not bring himself to repent.” Heb 12:16 described his sin: despising God’s promise. When he learns from his father that Jacob has in fact taken what he himself despised, he might have been driven to confess his spiritual fornication and profanity. He did not. His tears were over the blessing he had lost, not over the wickedness that led him to forfeit it. He insists that he is the one who has been wronged (“he took away my birthright,” Gen 27:36), even though he fully agreed to the sale. The writer is presenting Esau as an example of a “root of bitterness” that has the potential to defile many, and Esau refused to repent of that bitterness. The sequel shows its persistence in his attitude toward Jacob.⁸⁹

Gen. 27:41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

87 These two clauses can be interpreted in various ways. For discussion see Delitzsch, Westcott, and Lane, who all end up on the view that I adopt.

88 Additional confirmation is in the feminine gender of the pronoun, agreeing with “blessing.” What he failed to find was not repentance (feminine), but place (masculine) of repentance.

89 This insight is due to Anita Parunak.

We like to think that we are in control of our own decisions, so it may seem strange to think that a person could be unable to repent, but this insight is consistent with what we read earlier:

Heb 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in **departing ἀφίστημι G868 from the living God**. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be **hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**.

Paul similarly describes those who depart from the faith,

1Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall **depart ἀφίστημι G868 from the faith**, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; **having their conscience seared** with a hot iron;

The theme is dealing with a disruptive apostate, yet we must do it so as to “pursue peace.” Paul challenges Timothy with the same difficult task:

2Tim. 2:24 And the servant of the Lord **must not strive; but be gentle** unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will **give them repentance** to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Notes

Prepositions with πιστις

It will be important to note in each case whether the phrase is adverbial or adjectival.

On 11:7, see Westcott's note:

'Faith' and 'righteousness' are placed in different connexions one with the other, which will repay study.

(α) ἡ δικ. τῆς πίστεως (δικ. πίστ.) Rom. 4:11, 4:13.

(β) δικ. ἡ ἐκ π. (ἡ ἐκ π. δικ.) Rom. 9:30; 10:6.

(γ) ἡ ἐκ θεοῦ δικ. ἐπὶ τῇ π. Phil 3:9.

(δ) ἡ κατὰ π. δικ.

'*The righteousness according to faith,*' the righteousness which 'answers to,' 'corresponds with' faith, is that righteousness which God alone can give, which answers to, corresponds with, that spiritual order which faith alone enters.⁹⁰

We might add to these δια on the basis of 11:4, δι' ἧς ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος

ἐν πίστει 16

None in Hebrews (but with pronoun, in 11:2). The sense throughout seems to be "in connection with," "in reference to" (see Baugh on Heb 11:2).

Adverbial 9

James 1:6 But let him **ask in faith**, nothing wavering.

James 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world **rich in faith**, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by the faith** of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

1Tim. 1:4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly **edifying which is in faith**: so do. *Strictly adjectival, but the idea is that the action of edifying takes place in faith*

1Tim. 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) **a teacher of the Gentiles in faith** and verity. *like 1:4, the teaching is in faith*

1Tim. 2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they **continue in faith** and charity and holiness with sobriety.

1Tim. 3:13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great **boldness in the faith** which is in Christ Jesus. = *be bold in the faith*

2Tim. 1:13 **Hold fast** the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, **in faith** and love which is in Christ Jesus.

⁹⁰ Westcott, B. F. (Ed.). (1903). [The Epistle to the Hebrews the Greek text with notes and essays](#) (3d ed., p. 359). London: Macmillan.

Titus 3:15 Greet them that **love us in the faith**.

Adjectival 2

1Tim. 1:2 Unto Timothy, my own **son in the faith**:

1Tim. 4:12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou **an example** of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, **in faith**, in purity.

Articular 5

2Pet. 1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, **add to your faith** virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

1Cor. 16:13 ¶ Watch ye, **stand fast in the faith**, quit you like men, be strong.

2Cor. 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye **be in the faith**; prove your own selves.

Col. 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and **stablished in the faith**, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Titus 1:13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be **sound in the faith**;

διὰ πίστεως 18

This appears with pronouns in the account of Abel in 11:4: Πίσται ... **δι' ἧς** ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος, ... καὶ **δι' αὐτῆς** ἀποθανῶν ἔτι λαλεῖται, and Noah in 11:7 **δι' ἧς** κατέκρινεν τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τῆς κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνης ἐγένετο κληρονόμος. I suspect that in both cases it resumes the instrumental sense of the initial πίσται. Within Hebrews, the two are in complementary distribution: διὰ πίστεως appears only within a clause, while πίσται is only clause initial. Note how the preposition phrase is used in 11:33 in the same functional role as clause-initial πίσται with the earlier examples. This insight allows us to see διὰ πίστεως in 11:39, not as an inclusion with 11:33 (as VanHoye), but as a summary of the entire chapter.

Adverbial 6

1Pet. 1:5 Who are **kept** by the power of God **through faith** unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

2Cor. 5:7 (For we **walk by faith**, not by sight:)

Gal. 2:16 Knowing that a man is not **justified** by the works of the law, but **by the faith** of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by **ἐκ** the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Heb. 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who **through faith** and patience **inherit** the promises.

Heb. 11:33 Who **through faith subdued** kingdoms, **wrought** righteousness, **obtained** promises, **stopped** the mouths of lions,

2Tim. 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to **make thee wise** unto salvation **through faith** which is in Christ Jesus.

Adjectival 2

Phil. 3:9 ¶ And be found in him, not having mine own **righteousness**, which is of εκ the law, but that which is **through the faith** of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by επι faith:

Rom. 3:22 Even **the righteousness** of God which is **by faith** of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:

Articular 10

Rom. 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be **a propitiation through faith** in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Rom. 3:30 Seeing it is one God, which shall **justify** the circumcision by εκ faith, and uncircumcision **through faith**.

Rom. 3:31 Do we then **make void** the law **through faith**? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Gal. 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might **receive** the promise of the Spirit **through faith**.

Gal. 3:26 For ye **are** all the children of God **by faith** in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 2:8 For by [dative] grace are ye **saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Eph. 3:12 In whom we **have** boldness and access with confidence **by the faith** of him.

Eph. 3:17 That Christ may **dwell** in your hearts **by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

Col. 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Heb. 11:39 And these all, having **obtained** a good report **through faith**, received not the promise:

ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει·2

All articular; none in Hebrews

Acts 3:16 And his name **through faith** in his name **hath made** this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Phil. 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the **righteousness** which is of God **by faith**:

ἐκ πίστεως 22

None articular.

Adverbial 12

James 2:24 Ye see then how that by εκ works a man is **justified**, and not **by faith** only.

Rom. 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God **revealed from faith** to εἰς faith: as it is written, The just shall live **by faith**.

Rom. 3:30 Seeing it is one God, which shall **justify** the circumcision **by faith**, and uncircumcision through δια faith.

Rom. 5:1 Therefore being **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Rom. 9:32 Wherefore? Because they **sought** it not **by faith**, but as it were by ἐκ the works of the law.

Rom. 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he **eateth** not **of faith**: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. *note adjectival second instance*

Gal. 2:16 Knowing that a man is not **justified** by ἐκ the works of the law, but by δια the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be **justified by the faith** of Christ, and not by ἐκ the works of the law: for by ἐκ the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Gal. 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would **justify** the heathen **through faith**, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Gal. 3:11 But that no man is justified by ἐν the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall **live by faith**.

Gal. 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be **justified by faith**.

Gal. 5:5 For we through the Spirit **wait** for the hope of righteousness **by faith**.

Heb. 10:38 Now the just shall **live by faith**: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Adjectival 10

Rom. 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of **him which believeth in Jesus τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ**. *cf. Gal 3:7*

Rom. 4:16 Therefore it [the inheritance, 4:13] is **of faith**, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is **of the faith** of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Rom. 9:30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even **the righteousness which is of faith**.

Rom. 10:6 But the **righteousness** which is **of faith** speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

Rom. 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for **whatsoever** is not **of faith** is sin. *note adverbial first instance*

Gal. 3:7 Know ye therefore that **they which are of faith**, the same are the children of Abraham. *cf Rom 3:26*

Gal. 3:9 So then **they which be of faith** are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Gal. 3:12 And the **law** is not **of faith**: but, The man that doeth them shall live in εν them.

Gal. 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that **the promise by faith** of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. *cf Rom 4:16*

Gal. 5:5 For we through the Spirit **wait** for the hope of righteousness **by faith**.

κατὰ πίστιν 5

Adverbial

Heb. 11:13 These all **died in faith**, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Adjectival

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the **righteousness** which is **by faith**.

Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God, and an **apostle** of Jesus Christ, **according to the faith** of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;⁹¹

Titus 1:4 To Titus, mine own son **after** the common **faith**: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Articular

Matt. 9:29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, **According to your faith** be it unto you.

μετὰ πίστεως 2

None in Hebrews

Associates faith with other virtues as the possession of believers

Eph. 6:23 **Peace** be to the brethren, and **love with faith**, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1Tim. 1:14 And the **grace** of our Lord was exceeding abundant **with faith** and love which is in Christ Jesus.

εἰς πίστιν 1

Rom. 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God **revealed** from εκ faith **to faith**: as it is written, The just shall live by εκ faith.

χωρὶς πίστεως

Heb. 11:6 But **without faith** it is impossible to **please** him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

⁹¹ Knight (NIGTC) and Mounce (Word) both advocate a sense of purpose for κατὰ here.

Boldness before Men and God

How are the noun and verb used elsewhere in the NT? There are 37 instances in addition to the four in Hebrews.

Before God: 4x in 1 John, only in this sense. E.g.,

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have **confidence**, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

1 John 3:21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we **confidence** toward God.

1 John 4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have **boldness** in the day of judgment:

1 John 5:14 And this is the **confidence** that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

Of our Lord: only *before men*, and only from his last six months:

Mark 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he spake that saying **openly**. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

At the final feast of Tabernacles:

John 7:14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. 25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? 26 But, lo, he speaketh **boldly**, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

And he describes his ministry to the Jews at his trial:

John 18:19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. 20 Jesus answered him, I spake **openly** to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

Most of the other instances describe the boldness of the apostles *toward men*. For example, in Acts (12x),

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all **boldness** they may speak thy word,

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with **boldness**.

Paul in his epistles also speaks of his boldness *toward men*. E.g.,

2Cor. 3:12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great **plainness** of speech:

2Cor. 7:4 Great is my **boldness** of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

Phil. 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all **boldness**, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

Hebrews speaks twice of our boldness toward God, and 1 John four times, but I can find only one other instance of such usage elsewhere: in Ephesians, where (as in Hebrews) it is coupled with our approaching to the Father.

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12 In whom we have **boldness** and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Ephesians also speaks twice of our boldness toward men, and both times it is based on our boldness toward God in prayer.

Eph. 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth **boldly**, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak **boldly**, as I ought to speak.

The pattern in Ephesians is that our boldness toward God is the source of strength for us as we reach out to men.

Passives of μαρτυρέω

The key question in Heb 11:2 is whether the passive means that the witness was borne *to* the elders (thus Baugh) or *concerning* them to us. So we should review the use of this form elsewhere.

The situation is complicated by the ambiguity between middle and passive in tenses other than future and aorist, and by the deponent usage of prefixed verbs διαμαρτύρομαι and προμαρτύρομαι, which leads often to a quasi-active use of the middle of μαρτυρέω.

μαρτυρέω in the passive does not appear in the LXX. All of the NT uses are a witness *concerning*, not *to*, people.

Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of **honest report**, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Acts 10:22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and **of good report** among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

Acts 16:2 Which was **well reported of** by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

Acts 22:12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, **having a good report** of all the Jews which dwelt there,

3John 12 Demetrius **hath good report** of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, **being witnessed** by the law and the prophets;

Heb. 7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom **it is witnessed** that he liveth.

1Tim. 5:10 **Well reported of** for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

I am unable to find a single instance of a possible passive of μαρτυρέω in the NT, outside of Hebrews 11, that refers to the witness being borne *to* the person spoken of. We must go with France’s interpretation, that the witness is borne *about* them, by their being incorporated into OT scripture.

ῥῆμα vs. λόγος (11:3)

	דבר	מלה	אמרה	משא	פה	Total	
ῥῆμα	364	20	4		4	12	517
λόγος	818	10	6		10	3	1180
φωνή	2	0	1		0	11	600
πρᾶγμα	32	0	0		0	0	121
Total	1454	38	37		20	498	

Here are residuals after median polish:

	דבר	מלה	אמרה	משא	פה	Row Effects
ῥῆμα	160.0	8.0	-6.0	-7.75	0.0	6.75
λόγος	616.0	0.0	-2.0	0.25	-7.0	4.75
φωνή	-190.5	-0.5	2.5	-0.25	10.5	-4.75
πρᾶγμα	-160.0	0.0	2.0	0.25	0.0	-5.25
Col Effects	192.00	0.00	-2.00	-0.25	0.00	

The bottom line is that λόγος is the general translation of דָּבָר and ῥῆμα of מְלֵא, but with considerable crosstalk.

Ages of the Patriarchs (Table 11)

These ages show how exceptional Enoch’s age at translation is.

Fear of God

What is the sense of εὐλαβέομαι in 11:7?

The cognate adjective εὐλαβής uniformly means “devout,” describing a pious attitude toward God, and from this some have urged softening the translation of the verb from “fear” to “reverence.” But the verb is often used in purely secular settings where “reverence” is clearly inappropriate, and where the notion of fear is inescapable:

Patriarch	Age at Death
Adam	930
Seth	912
Enos	905
Cainan	910
Mahalaleel	895
Jared	962
Methuselah	969
Lamech	777
Mean	907.5
Stdev	59.1

Table 11: Ages of the Pre-Diluvial Patriarchs at Death

Acts 23:10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, **fearing** lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

Deut. 2:4 And charge the people, saying, Ye are going through the borders of your brethren the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir; and they shall fear you, and **dread** you greatly.

1Sam. 18:15 And Saul saw that he was very wise, and he was **afraid** of him. ... 29 And he was yet more **afraid** of David.

It seems best to recognize a semantic distinction in both testaments between the noun (which emphasizes devotion) and the verb (which always seems to be associated with fear of consequences).

Heirs and Inheritance in Hebrews

In the LXX, κληρονομ* translates two Hebrew roots, both of which are dedicated to it. (Table 12; first count is total from BW; second count is Ben Sira.) What is the difference between the two terms?

	יָרַשׁ etc	נָחַל etc.	אָחַז etc	Other	Total
κληρονομ*	121 (7)	164 (25)	3	82	370
κατακληρονομεω	23 (1)	23 (2)	1	14	61

Table 12: LXX Vocabulary for Inheritance

- נָחַל occurs mostly as the noun (222 vs. 59), while יָרַשׁ is predominantly used as a verb (230 vs. 14).
- Both are used of the conquest of the land, but only נָחַל describes Israel as the Lord's inheritance (perhaps because it is more common as a noun).

I suspect that something analogous to stem suppletion is going on, with regard to part of speech rather than tense. We need a careful comparison of usage in the Pentateuch vs. later books to see whether we can detect a secondary development from noun to verb in the case of נָחַל, and in the other direction for יָרַשׁ.

First, the Son is introduced as the Father's heir. This is almost certainly a reflex of Ps 2:8 נָחַלָה, though Hebrews quotes only 2:7 (an example of how the reader is intended to bring in the context of the citation)

Heb. 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed **heir** of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Heb. 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath **by inheritance** obtained a more excellent name than they.

The other references are all to the inheritance of his people, prototypically the patriarchs, but ultimately us. What do we inherit?

Salvation:

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be **heirs** of salvation?

Promises:

Heb. 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience **inherit** the promises.

Heb. 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the **heirs** of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

Heb. 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal **inheritance**.

Righteousness:

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became **heir** of the righteousness which is by faith.

Place:

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an **inheritance**, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Blessing:

Heb. 12:17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have **inherited** the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

1:14, as the first reference to our inheritance, seems to introduce the others, which may all be understood as facets of that salvation. See study on the Christmas Promise at <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/christmas/notes/Christmas11ThePromise.pdf>

Vocabulary for “Country”

11:14 πατρίς, fatherland, place of one’s πατήρ

Matt 2:12 the wise men return to their χώρα district, region, place. Acts 12:20 of a political region; Acts 18:23 Galatia and Phrygia

In the sense of “field,” ἀγρός

Acts 7:3, also of Abraham, γή—this is the common rendering of ארץ in the LXX.

Gen. 14:7 And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the **country** of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar.—שדה, which is usually ἀγρός, though here (through scribal error?) LXX has ἄρκων.

Hebrew origins for ῥάβδος

	מַקֵּל	מִטָּה	שֶׁבֶט	מִשְׁעָנָה	Total
ῥάβδος	16	53	27	6	117
Total	18	66 ⁹²	190	11	

92 Only instances that KJV translates “staff” (16x) or “rod” (50x), to omit instances that refer to a tribe.

11:16 and John 14:2

In 2006-2007, I expounded the Lord's promise of dwelling places in the Father's house in John 14:2 of the church, a view anticipated by R.H. Gundry, "In My Father's House Are Many Monai." *ZNW* 58 (1967) 68–72, which I had not seen. My view in 2007 rested on the Pauline image of the church as the new temple of God. But Hebrews emphasizes another perspective: the temple as anticipation of God's heavenly resting place—a replica of Eden, to be restored in the heavenly city (Heb 12:22; 13:13) which will one day descend to earth (Revelation 21). And this place is said to be "prepared" ἐτοιμάζω G2090, like the Father's house of which the Lord speaks:

Heb. 11:16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath **prepared** for them a city.

Rev. 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, **prepared** as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev 21:2 suggests that the choice between heaven and the church is not either-or. The heavenly city is the bride, which is the church. Hebrews in particular leads us to see a close relation between God's heavenly resting place and the society of saints:

Heb. 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

So perhaps it is best to keep both images in mind. The God who abode in the temple in the OT, now dwells in the spiritual temple of the church (Eph 2:22). This church should be seen as a colony of the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22), God's resting place, which one day will come to the New Earth (Rev 21-22). Our Lord's work with his Father, described in John 14:2-3, includes both sending the Spirit by which believers are incorporated into the church (John 16:7), and completing the heavenly work described in Heb 11:16, in keeping with his designation as "he who hath builded the house" (Heb 3:3).

Is τω θεω in Acts 7:20 elative?

Joüon:

141n Some nouns such as אֶל and אֶלֶהִים in the genitive case can serve as intensifiers: Ps 36.7; הַרְרֵי אֶל very high mountains; 80.11 אֶל אֲרָזֵי אֵל very tall cedar-trees; 1Sm 14.15 הַרְדַּת אֱלֹהִים a very great panic; 26.12 תַּרְדֵּמת יְהוָה a [p. 492] very deep sleep; Ct 8.6 שִׁלְהֶבֶת יָהּ a frightful flame. See Thomas 1953 and Saydon 1954. As a matter of fact, the idea was already current among mediaeval Jewish exegetes; see, e.g. Radaq ad 1Sm 26.12. So also in Ugr.: Gordon, UT, § 13.22; Tropper, § 91.314.1.

Waltke and O'Connor 14.5b

Various divine names can be similarly used: "A kind of superlative sense," as A. B. Davidson noted, "is given to a word by connecting it with the divine name. Probably the idea was that God originated the thing ... or that it belonged to Him, and was therefore extraordinary. Sometimes the meaning appears to be 'in God's estimation.'" (Quoted by D. Winton Thomas in his review of previous scholarly literature, "A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of

Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew,” *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953) 209–24, at 219; cf. P. P. Saydon, “Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew and Maltese,” *Vetus Testamentum* 4 (1954) 432–33; Thomas, “The Use of נָצַח as a Superlative in Hebrew,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 (1956) 106–9; Thomas, “Some Further Remarks on Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew,” *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968) 120–24.) נָשִׂיא אֲלֵהֶם a mighty prince Gen 23:6 ; קָרַדַּת אֲלֵהֶם a very great trembling 1 Sam 14:15 ; הַרְרֵי אֵל מְאֹד mighty mountains Ps 36:7 ; גַּן יְהוָה a splendid garden Isa 51:3 ; עִיר גְּדוּלָה לְאֵלֵהֶם an exceedingly great city Jonah 3:3.

But the usage is always subject to interpretation. In Jonah 3:3, the closest example in the LXX, though medieval Jewish commentators take the relative sense, many commentators (KD, Deane (Pulpit), Stuart (Word), Smith-Page (New American)) demur, since the context invites a literal reading, and the same is certainly appropriate in Acts 7:20 as well.

Josephus (*Ant.* 2:210-216) preserves a Jewish legend that the Lord appeared to Amram, the father of Moses, in a dream, telling him of the mission of the son his wife had conceived. In the light of this tradition, the reading “to God” must be preferred. “The evidence indicates a well-established tradition of interpretation that found in the word ἄστυς an indication that the infant possessed a visible sign of God’s elective favor.”⁹³

Verbs for Getting (6:15, 11:13, 39)

	לקח	נשא	זחא	Total Gk
λαμβάνω	811	146	6	1260
ἐπιτυγχάνω				2
κομίζω	2	4		20
Total Heb	966	658	64	

Liddell and Scott, the comprehensive lexicon of ancient Greek, gives four meanings for ἐπιτυγχάνω (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3De%3Dpitugxa%2Fnw>). The first is the literal sense, “hit a target. The second, reminiscent of simple τυγχάνω and omitted in BDAG, is “light or fall upon, meet with,” which fits my understanding of Heb 6:15 as a reference to Melchizedek. Here is that section of LS:

- II. light or fall upon, meet with,
 - I. c. dat. pers., Ar.Nu.195,535, Th.3.75 ; “ἐ. γυναικὶ βιαζομένη” Pl.Lg.874c: also c.dat.rei, “ἐ. σορῶ” Hdt.1.68; “ναυσί” Th.8.34 ; “βιβλίω” Luc.Dem.Enc. 27 ; ἐ.[ταῖς θύραις] ἀνεωγμέναις to find them open, Pl.Smp.223b.
 2. c.gen.pers., “μετρίου ἀνδρός” Ar.Pl.245, cf. Plu.Art.12 : c.gen.rei, “ἐ. ὀλκάδος ἀναγομένης” Th.3.3 ; εὐώνων ἐ. a low market, Arist.Oec. l.c.
 3. rarely c.acc., “τὰς ἀπλᾶς [ἐπιθυμίας] ἐν ὀλίγοις ἐπιτεύξῃ” Pl. R.431c ; “ἅττ’ ἂν ἐπιτύχης” Eub.123.5.
 4. abs., Ar.Ra.570, Th.6.38 ; mostly ὁ ἐπιτυχὼν the first person one meets, any chance person, esp. in pl., Hdt.2.2, Antipho 2.1.1 : with neg., “οὐδὲ φαύλων ἀνδρῶν οὐδὲ τῶν ἐ.”

93 Lane, W. L. (1991). *Hebrews 9–13* (Vol. 47B, p. 370). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

Pl.Cra.390d ; “οὐ γὰρ οἶμαι τοῦ ἐ. εἶναι.” Id.Euthphr.4a ; οὐ περὶ τοῦ ἐ. on no common matter, Id.R.352d : without the Art., “ἐπιτυχόντος ἀνθρώπου λόγος” E.HF1248, cf. Phot. p. 140R. (=gloss on Eup. 25D.).

τέλος and Cognates in Hebrews

The contrast in verses about receiving the promise has a parallel in references to perfection:

Heb. 10:14 For by one offering **he hath perfected** for ever them that are sanctified.

Heb. 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us **should not be made perfect**.

How can we reconcile these?

We also need to take into account the common use of the verb in a cultic sense, “to fill the hands,” when predicated of our Lord.

The reference in 12:2 is complicated by the use of a cognate of τέλος that appears nowhere else in the Greek Bible, τελειότης, and only recently was recognized in pre-Christian Greek literature.⁹⁴ In particular, it is *not* the participle of the verb τελειόω.

Start by distinguishing the forms and of whom they are predicated

Form	of our Lord	of saints	other
τελειόω G5048	<p>Heb. 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. → priestly consecration, cf. 2:17</p> <p>Heb. 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (passive)</p> <p>Heb. 7:28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.</p>	<p>Heb. 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. → has to do with our approach to God</p> <p>Heb. 9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; → ditto</p> <p>Heb. 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto [πτε προσέρχομαι] perfect.</p> <p>Heb. 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. → effect of cultic activity</p> <p>Heb. 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.</p> <p>Heb. 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,</p>	

94 Croy, JBL 114 (1995): 117–19.

Form	of our Lord	of saints	other
τέλειος G5046		Heb. 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age , even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. → maturity	Heb. 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;
τελειότης G5047		Heb. 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection ; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, → maturity	
τελείωσις G5050		Heb. 7:11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?	
τελευτάω G5053		Heb. 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he died , made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.	
τελειωτής G5051	Heb. 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;		

Observations:

1. We can distinguish several different meanings of the root
 - (a) A specialized form meaning “to die” (11:22)
 - (b) Sanctification of a priest, deriving from the Levitical use “fill (the hands)” (all the uses of the verb of our Lord fit here, and the parallels with 2:10 and 5:9 suggest that 12:2 does as well).
 - (c) A corresponding cultic use applied to people, enabling them to draw near to God (7:19; 9:9; 10:1, 14)
 - (d) Maturity (5:14; 6:1; common Pauline use); being all that one should be;
2. Cases to explain:
 - (a) 9:11, of the heavenly tabernacle. Perhaps to be traced to the use of συντελέω (from πλῆ) to describe the completion of the earthly tabernacle and its furnishings (Ex 40:33; Num 7:1). The earthly tabernacle was said to be “finished,” as finally as the work of Moses could make it, but the second Moses achieves an even greater level of completion.
 - (b) The contrast of 10:14 and 11:40 remains the sticking point. All instances of the verb appear to be cultic, whether of sanctifying the high priest, or of enabling the worshippers to draw near to God. (In a sense, these two are the same: it is the priest’s

sanctification that enables him to draw near, and we now have that same privilege.) We have been enabled to draw new boldly, and in that sense we have been perfected. It would not be a problem to say that there is yet a further drawing near available, when we are with the Lord. The problem is that the OT saints are said (11:40) not yet to have experienced that, though they are with the Lord. The link to the yet-future promise (11:39) suggests that the kingdom experience will surpass even the current experience of those in heaven. It represents the full perfection, when we with glorified bodies serve in the renewed Eden. That will not happen until the first resurrection. But it has happened in the case of our Lord, who already has his resurrection body—the firstfruits from the dead (1 Cor 15:20), which perhaps is why he can be described as “finisher” in 12:2 even though the OT saints are not yet “finished,” 11:40.

Vocabulary for Sharing

I draw a semantic parallel between 12:10 and 2 Pet 1:4, but the verbs for “partaker, partake” are different: μεταλαμβάνω in 12:10, but κοινωνός ← κοινωνέω in Peter. Heb 2:14 brings yet another root into the semantic system:

Heb. 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers κοινωνέω of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part μετέχω of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

This collection of words invites further study. One hypothesis is that in Hebrews at least, the compounds with μετα- reflect sharing in something that is fundamentally different (what our divine Lord did toward our human nature; what we do with his holiness), but κοινων- is sharing in something that is intrinsic to us (the standard human relation with flesh and blood). While this does not hold with Peter’s verse, it would be consistent with an oft-cited parallel in Luke, where the μετα- form describes those who are “in the other ship”:

Luke 5:7 And they beckoned unto their partners μετόχοις, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them.

while in a context without such a distinction, we have the κοινων- form:

Luke 5:10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners κοινωνοί with Simon.

More precisely, the κοινων- forms are unmarked, while μετα- is marked for some kind of distinction. μετέχω<ο> μετοχ* <ο> μεταλαμβάνω has 21 hits in the NT, while κοινων- appears 39x, consistent with this distinction. Peter does not use the μετα- terms at all, which would be consistent with the more limited vocabulary of a Galilean fisherman compared with the sophisticated Greek of Luke and the writer to Hebrews.

Consider the instances of the μετα- words in the NT:

Verse	Lexeme	Notes
Luke 5:7 And they beckoned unto their partners , which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.	μετέχω	the other ship
Acts 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple,	μεταλαμβάνω	food

Verse	Lexeme	Notes
and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,		
Acts 24:25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.	μεταλαμβάνω	anomalous—as though it were λαμβάνω
Acts 27:33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.	ματαλαμβάνω	food
1Cor. 9:10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.	μετέχω	plower vs. thresher
1Cor. 9:12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.	μετέχω	others vs. us
1Cor. 10:17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.	μετέχω	being many food
1Cor. 10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.	μετέχω	two different tables food
1Cor. 10:30 For if I by grace be a partaker , why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?	μετέχω	food
2Cor. 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?	μετοχή	rightness vs. unrightness
Heb. 1:9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows .	μέτοχος	“above thy fellows”
Heb. 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;	μετέχω	deity vs. humanity
Heb. 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;	μέτοχος	heavenly calling
Heb. 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;	μέτοχος	Christ vs. us
Heb. 5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.	μετέχω	food
Heb. 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,	μέτοχος	HS is God, different from us
Heb. 6:7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed,	μεταλαμβάνω	food; earth vs. God

Verse	Lexeme	Notes
receiveth blessing from God:		
Heb. 7:13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.	μετέχω	a different tribe, but not crossing a boundary
Heb. 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers , then are ye bastards, and not sons.	μέτοχος	
Heb. 12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.	μεταλαμβάνω	
2Tim. 2:6 The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.	μεταλαμβάνω	food

We need to set aside use of μεταλαμβάνω for food; other anomalies are Acts 24:25, Heb 7:13; 12:8. But otherwise the rule seems to hold fairly consistently.

Note the use of κοίνος in Acts for sharing across the believers (except for the food references):

Acts 2:44 And all that believed were together, and had all things **common**;

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things **common**.

12:15 ὑστερέω ἀπό

Elsewhere in the Greek Bible, the expression appears only negated:

Dan 4:30 καὶ οὐχ ὑστερήσει ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων οὐθέν. “nothing of these shall fail [to come to pass]”--the ἀπό is partitive, modifying the subject of the verb.

Sir. 7:34 μὴ ὑστέρει ἀπὸ κλαιόντων, fail not to be with them that weep

Job 36:17 οὐχ ὑστερήσει δὲ ἀπὸ δικαίων κρίμα, judgment shall not fail from the righteous

Eccl 6:2 καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὑστερῶν τῆ ψυχῆ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν ἐπιθυμήσει”nothing is lacking to his soul of all that he shall desire”--modifies subject of the verb