



Paul

Hebrews 11:13 *“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.”*

Have you ever woken up in the middle of the night with an idea? Maybe a solution came to mind. Then you can't sleep. That thought is transfixed in your heart. What drove Paul to have a chapter on faith? I feel that Paul had a midnight episode. He was lying there tossing and turning with a thought? This whole journey for him has been about forgetting the Jewish traditions and knowing God through Jesus the Christ. Yet, he knew the law of Moses. The stories of the saints. Jesus drives us to go deeper. I suspect that Paul had an epiphany. All this time he thought the saints were great men of faith. Yet, what if their faith went well beyond their greatness?

The saints of the past impressed him. Yet, it made no sense. Why did they live by faith and not work for their faith? Paul's Jewish religion was about works to please God. Yet, Jesus had died to pay for it all. The saints had believed God. Genesis 15:6 must have eaten at Paul. *“Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”* I am sure Paul was thinking about Jacob wanting his bones taken to the promised land. It was no different for many other saints. Something within them unconditionally believed. By faith they saw something Paul had missed all these years. Then, in the middle of the night, it hit him: faith!

I believe Paul wrote this chapter because his faith had grown. He witnessed the death of Stephan, but did not understand it. Why die for the wrong religion? Then Paul met Jesus on the Damascus Road. Slowly it all became clear.

Acts 9:15 “But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

Paul had to suffer to know how the saints suffered. To believe in a promise without seeing it. He left a cushy life for one of suffering. Why suffer for an unseen God? Did that pass by the wandering mind of Paul? This man had to leave what he knew and go to a faith he did not know. Paul reluctantly did it by faith. Although he did not know Jesus, he could recognise the Christ. The Jewish religious leaders were looking for him. Literally, on the Damascus Road Paul went from blind to seeing God clearly. Finding the Christ they had looked for.

Hebrews 11:39 “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

I include this man in the Hebrews 11 faith study because he lived it, wrote it, and could understand it. By faith he was willing to follow Jesus. To go to the Christians. They could have killed him. If we were being honest, would we know Jesus or God if they came to us? What would it take to see clearly? Jesus said in Matthew 25 *“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was*

in prison and you came to visit me.” I suspect Paul realized that living by faith feeds the poor and notices God in everything. A far cry from trying to be noticed in public as a religious leader.

Paul did not know that his teachings or writings would be in the Bible. I think that would have horrified him. Yet, he talked a lot about hope in the unseen. By faith Paul accepted his fate. He accepted God's terms. Honestly, Paul had to undo all he knew. Is there a better saint in the Bible that thought he knew God but had to lay himself down in humble submission? Listen to Paul's heart:

1 Corinthians 9:19 *“Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.”*

By faith all the saints dropped their lives to move the kingdom. I believe Paul wrote this chapter because his heart bled for God. He was blind from religious law. Yet, God gave him sight to see the kingdom and people. Then and only then could he see the saints in the right light. God's light! Ironically, we owe Paul some debt of gratitude. He expressed himself as a suffering servant. Yet, he struggled as we would. I do believe that Hebrews 11 is pored out blood. The heart of Paul had changed. We should see it too. To live by faith that the unseen God will do as he said he would. Should it take suffering to see that?