

From Hebrews 11. BIBLICAL FAITH AS REASONING, PART 1

#1. A reference to this text yields to our understanding a replete vista of the *phenomenon of biblical faith*. True belief, according to Scripture, is *a way of reasoning* about eternity, about time and about the relation between the two of them.

#2. Biblical faith transcends religious practice, ritual and accepted doctrines. It does not leave the workings of the mind untouched. The patterns of Christianity are principally to be detected in the reasoning and behavior of the individual believer.

#3. Hence the review, in this chapter, of those often referred to as "the roll call of faith": "Abel" v. 4; "Enoch" v. 5; "Noah" v. 7; "Abraham" v. 8; "Sarah" v. 11; "Isaac" v. 20; "Jacob" v. 21; "Joseph" v. 22; "Moses" v. 23; "Rahab" v. 31; "Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets" v. 32. This *directory of faithful actors* in time and materiality demonstrates the Bible's favored use of *redundance*. Faith as reasoning is recognizable in both the New Testament and the Old Testament. No alteration of its pattern is noticeable between the two testaments.

#4. What is it then that all these believers of Hebrews 11 and all contemporary believers have in common? *It's a way of reasoning, a way of thinking that only the word of God could have put in place.*

#5. The reasoning of the faithful, in those times or anytime, is not driven by the temporal, nor by circumstance, nor by human experience. *Biblical reasoning is a supernatural phenomenon*. There is a lot at stake. "And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect" v. 39, 40.

From Hebrews 11. FAITH AS REASONING, PART 2

THE STAGING OF BIBLICAL REASONING. In every one of the personal circumstances addressed in this text, *faithful reasoning* was staged into operation. This was done by an act of the will and a sense of duty. It did not appear spontaneously nor by accident. We learn how to reason faithfully, or we function according to worldly reasoning. Once the word of God is pronounced into the human situation, the mind is obligated to pursue that imposed standard of thought. *In other words, the mind must be redeemed from the context of time, materiality, naturalism and human experience*. One cannot pour revelation into the common mold of unaided human reason. The apparent heresy, so the world thinks, is this: *The starting point for thinking is Scripture and therefore it is not human reasoning*. Biblical reasoning displaces the unquestioned authority of the human mind. Faith as reasoning is staged into every human situation and circumstance.

There are at least 6 stages.

STAGE #1. The recognition of two distinct fields of representation.

STAGE #2. To manifest the disequilibrium between those two forms of meaning.

STAGE #3. Suppression of one or the other of those two kinds of representation.

STAGE #4. To re-enter any situation or circumstance on the foundation of revealed faith.

STAGE #5. To worship God as the axis of every historical, temporal, personal event.

STAGE #6. To establish the supernatural coherence between the eternal and the natural. In the long ago, "Enoch" (v. 5, 6), as did the others in chapter 11, grasped hold on this truth. His purpose in life was singular: "Before he was taken up he was pleasing to God". And Enoch mastered the secret--"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

From Hebrews 11. FAITH AS REASONING, PART 3

THE STAGING OF BIBLICAL REASONING.

STAGE #1. The recognition of two distinct fields of representation.

In every kind of situation, circumstance and state of being the "roll call of faith" teaches us to *implement biblical reasoning*. We have been created by the Lord with the standing of *representational creatures*. A moment's contemplation will affirm that all our proximity to the world of things is known because of one remarkable factor. All things are converted by the central nervous system into ideas or symbols or representations in the mind. *This we may call the natural field of representation*, also called experience. The function of the 5 senses, instituted by the Almighty, serves us well. Impairment of even one of them is a serious loss. We learn to rely on them and trust them.

However, there is a second representational field. *This field is the word of God*. It represents to us the greater reality. A reality greater than and beyond anything the central nervous system can discover on its own. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" v. 1. Every example in this text was faced with stage 1. When the Lord speaks then there appears an alternative to and a contradiction to the witness of the 5 senses.

This scripture maintains that revelation is not mere history. The Bible is a *set of linguistic representations pushed by God into the world of men and things*. Every believer listed in chapter 11 was put into acknowledgement of these two fields of representations. We do not deny what is called "the real world" nor do we deny *the representational field of Scripture*. The Bible is to be elevated to its truthful position: a revealed field of representations, independent of men and time. Stage 1.

From Hebrews 11. FAITH AS REASONING, PART 4

THE STAGING OF BIBLICAL REASONING

STAGE #2: To manifest the disequilibrium between revealed and natural meaning or representations.

There are two sources of meaning. One is generated by men through experience (natural), the other is pushed into the world by the Lord Himself. Revelation represents the mind of God; that is, His thinking.

But there can be no balance no equilibrium between the two. And that disequilibrium is owed to source. Obedience to the word of God over the dictates of common sense and human wisdom is the only way to *manifest the disequilibrium that exists between the two*. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going" v. 8.

The prevailing judgment is that since God gave us human reason and common sense then it should be considered on par with or even superior to revelation. *That cannot be true*. Those persons mentioned in this text – everyone -- consciously manifested the structure of *faithful reasoning*. And they did so in the personal vortex of trial, hardship and danger. Uncertainty of outcome was part of the package. The immediate shock is that faith as reasoning so perfectly contradicts the findings of natural human thinking.

An extreme exemplar; unthinkable and improbable according to natural reason: "By Faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son" v. 17.

The repetitive stanza "by faith" signals the believer's intention to manifest this disequilibrium between biblical faith and human reason. As in Moses who "by faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is unseen" v. 27. Stage 2.

From Hebrews 11. FAITH AS REASONING, PART 5

THE STAGING OF BIBLICAL REASONING

STAGE #3: Suppression of one or the other of the two fields of representation.

The *implementation of biblical reasoning* requires the suppression of the field of natural representations. *Faith, as demonstrated in the roll call of faith, inherently involves suppression of common sense and unaided human reasoning*.

Proof:

- "By faith Noah--prepared an ark" v. 7.
- "By faith even Sarah--received the ability to conceive" v. 11.
- "By faith Abraham--offered up Isaac" v. 17.
- "By faith" Moses' "parents" kept him alive v. 23.
- "By faith--Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets"--
"conquered kingdoms"--"shut the mouths of lions"--"escaped the power of the sword" v.
32, 33.

Reasoning founded upon human wisdom and human lived experience does not conduce to facing such risks. Those things would have never happened if the historical actors had not suppressed naturalism. There is a kind of faith, however, that routinely suppresses the word of God. Such a faith considers the field of revealed representations (the Bible) too time-bound, too irrational to stand independently of human reason.

From Genesis 3 on Scripture shows that the *preferred faith* is one that puts stipulated limits on the reach of biblical meaning. The assumption is that no revealed meaning is permitted to transgress the approval of unaided human reason. In other words, *faith and its behaviors must always be "reasonable"*.

Problem: The Scripture nowhere recognize nor indulge that interpretation. Reading the Bible effectively, necessarily removes revealed meaning from the tyranny of human reason. Stage 3.

From Hebrews 11. FAITH AS REASONING, PART 6

THE STAGING OF BIBLICAL REASONING

STAGE #4 To re-enter any situation or circumstance on the foundation of biblical faith.

This particular stage presents an imagery. As situation and circumstance encroach upon someone, the believer "mentally steps outside" of the immediacy of experience and *turns to the Word of God*. Every exemplar in this text recognized that two fields of representations were operating; the revealed and the natural. Every person named was convicted of the disequilibrium between the field of revealed symbols and the field of natural representations. And every person of faith consciously, decisively suppressed human experiential reasoning and then elevated revealed language in its stead.

At this point, something remarkable and admirable happened. Every believer *mentally re-entered the imminent experience on the basis of full confidence in the word of God and in the power of God.*

- Even to one's own personal detriment. Proof: "By Faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasure of sin" v. 24, 25.
- Faithful reasoning does not perceive the situation on reasonable terms any longer. Proof: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace" v. 30, 31.
- Faith as reasoning does not rest on the expectation of reasonable outcomes. It perceives and pursues supernatural advantage.
- Faithful reasoning doesn't change the situation. It changes the perception of the situation.
- The faithful mind overrules human wisdom, experience and reason. Stage 4.

From Hebrews 11. FAITH AS REASONING, PART 7

THE STAGING OF BIBLICAL REASONING

STAGE #5. To worship God as the true axis of every historical, temporal and personal event.

Worship is coming to God. "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" v. 6. Faith as reasoning reveals to the mind that *the worship of the God of the Bible is the structure by which believers deal with the sociological and material realities that surround them--what people like to call "the real world".*

This revealed truth astounds and confounds human reason. Lived human experience posits that one must deal directly and often immediately with the particulars of circumstance. But the roll call of faith manifestly corrects that *misperception.*

The structure of worship teaches us to deal with God firstly and directly, and to resist direct dealing with the mechanics of circumstance. Proof: Jacob understood time, life, history and the future as dependencies of the Lord. That is the God that the patriarch "worshipped" v. 21. He chose to worship the Lord as the axis of all things temporal.

Redemption from situation and circumstance is the action of God in time. Proof: "By faith (Moses) kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the

firstborn would not touch them" v. 28. That terrifying night in Egypt the Israelites devoted themselves to worship of the Almighty. That was all they could do and it was all they needed to do. Faithful reasoning believes that redemption from circumstance is supernatural.

Worship is the structure by which we deal with "the real world." Worship is not a speculative model. Natural reasoning vigorously opposes this revealed truth.

"By faith" believers reject normative human reason. Stage 5.

From Hebrews 11. FAITH AS REASONING, PART 8

THE STAGING OF BIBLICAL REASONING

STAGE #6. To establish supernatural coherence between the eternal and the natural.

Those contemplating the life of faith can be alarmed by the issue of *coherence between the realm of eternal spirit and the range of materiality*. The question is: How can something immaterial impose any influence upon something else quite material in nature?

As applied:

- There is no natural coherence between the promise of God and the living tissue of Isaac v. 17, 18.
- No natural coherence exists between revelation and Sarah's reproductive system v. 11.
- Natural coherence fails to link the word of God and geophysics in the time of Noah v. 7.

There is no natural coherence between the Bible and everyday life. "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible" v.3.

Believers, those who determine to function "by faith", grasp a dimensional difference. Their reasoning is prepared to accept the unseen reality of *supernatural coherence* that links the word of the Lord to the material world of human experience. An exclusive trust in the power of God is the common holding of all the personalities of chapter 11. Confidence in supernatural coherence surmounts the dictates of common sense and unaided human reason.

It is the driving principle of prayer. Any reading of Scripture without it is in default. Stage 6.

From Hebrews 11. FAITH AS REASONING, PART 8

THE STAGING OF BIBLICAL REASONING

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned" v.29. The favor of God is heavily weighted toward those who "by faith" put total trust in *supernatural coherence*. This particular factor, revealed everywhere in Scripture, stands as an immediate threat to imperious human natural reason.

The redundant use of "by faith" in the text necessarily refers to the personal implementation of supernatural coherence between the word of God and time; while the displacement of natural coherence between things is enforced.

This is the fulcrum of faith. Human natural reason is a gift from the Lord. It holds stupefying capacities. It is not to be despised. But it also contains a danger. Natural reason, if not controlled, will put limits on revealed meaning and will constrain the reach of faith. At the margin of the Red Sea (Exodus 14), the Israelites turned to natural coherence, prompted by natural reason.

Crisis tends to force the issue. It takes courage to live "by faith" in any state of crisis. Faith is not just ascription to biblical doctrine. It is a way of thinking, detached from circumstance yet fully entrained to the word of God. In the moment when it mattered most; with life or death on the scales, biblical faith among the Israelites collapsed. "Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness" (Exodus 14:12).

From Hebrews 11. FAITH AS REASONING, PART 10

THE STAGING OF BIBLICAL REASONING.

This text provokes a comparison.

- Those who chose to live "by faith" obeyed the Lord (v. 8),
- faced the incumbent risks (v. 27),
- defied normative human reason (v. 19)
- and were consecrated to pleasing God (v. 6).

Beyond all of that, these people, confronting the same carnal world in which we live, knew--each one-- that they had become "an alien" (v. 9); "having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (v. 13). In the world but no longer of the world.

The contrast: People of this world make at least two important mistakes. First: they steadily incline toward overdetermined interest in their flesh. Second: they depend to the point of exclusion upon unaided human reason. This particular brace of behaviors is, unfortunately,

shared by some in the churches. Chapter 11 warns us, indirectly, not to be too enamored with our cleverness, nor too fixed on this world.

The wonderful people enshrined in this text lived "by faith" as non-natural reasoning: men of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground" v. 38; every one of them, "having gained approval through their faith" v. 39.

END OF SERIES