

## Trusting God Rewards Those Who Seek Him

Culture of Grace: Practices & Habits of GracePoint Church / Hebrews 11:1-16 / June 7, 2026

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### **Introduction:**

This morning, we are looking at Hebrews 11 to consider how faith involves trusting God rewards those who seek him. To understand this, we will consider how the author of Hebrews discloses the nature of faith in verses 1-10 and an important clarifying truth in verses 11-16. Start in verses 1-5, where we see,

### **Faith Involves a Firm Trust in God**

We need to start with some context. Hebrews 11 follows exhortations for followers of Christ in chapter 10 to endure persecution and trials in faith. Verse 39 ends this way, “But we [believers] are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.” Chapter 11, then, shows the nature of this faith that preserves our souls. Look at verses 1-2, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation.” Faith is connected to things hoped for and unseen. This is key for our understanding because it shows faith involves trusting in things we can’t always tangibly touch or feel. But note the strength of the words in verse 1. This isn’t wishful thinking. It’s assurance and conviction. Faith is a firm trust in things we hope for and don’t always see right in front of us. The reason we know this comes in verse 2, with God as the implied subject. Commendation means approval or praise. We know this is the nature of faith because this is how Old Testament saints found favor from God. Verses 3-5 gives an idea of how this works, followed by two examples. Look there with me, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.” Faith is exercised to trust that the visible things of creation were created by the invisible word of their creator. Think about this with me. We have ample evidence pointing to a creator forming everything from nothing. But, even with all that evidence, we still must embrace the truth by faith. Faith is “the conviction of things not seen.” Following this, Abel and Enoch serve as fascinating examples. For one, neither story in Genesis speak of faith but obedience of God. In fact, Enoch is only mentioned in a few verses, showing how long he lived, who he fathered, how he “walked with God” and then just wasn’t there. Now we learn their obedience of God came from faith. Second, Abel found approval, because his first fruits offering was better than Cains. Yet, Abel still died. However, Enoch found approval and didn’t die, a point mentioned five times. Gareth Cockerill beautifully observes, “All, like Abel, will die without the fullness of what God has promised. All, like Enoch, are promised triumph over death.” (Gareth Lee Cockeril, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 526). Family, like Abel, we are waiting to experience God’s full promises but, like Enoch, we have assurance of that promised hope in the resurrection. We’ll revisit this idea in a moment. Right now, notice how both Abel and Enoch pleased God through a firm trust in God. Then, verses 6-10 show how,

### **Faith Trusts God to Reward Those who Seek Him**

Verse 6 brings together the ideas of commendation, assurance of things hoped for, and conviction of things unseen. Look there with me, “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” The initial statement is clear, no one can please God without faith. Nothing you do, no humanitarian effort or moral way of life will ever please God apart from faith. Why? Because the only way to please God is by drawing near to Him in faith, believing He exists and rewards those who seek Him. God, as the Sovereign Creator, made humanity to know Him, love Him, be satisfied by Him, and to glorify Him. We can only do these things if we believe He exists. Yet, God doesn’t just desire us to believe He’s real. He desires us to trust that He is as gracious and giving as He says He is. Family, God makes so many promises in Scripture to bless those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6 calls us to recognize this is the exercise of faith that finds God's favor. Continue in verse 7, "By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." The story of Noah confirms this. Let me summarize the story if you're unfamiliar with it. Not long after Adam and Eve sinned, humanity became so corrupted by sin that no one was faithful to God, except Noah. God determined to judge the world through a flood but told Noah to build an ark to be saved. Here's what we may not realize. Others had the opportunity to be saved by believing in God and trusting His promise to Noah. Yet, no one believed God was real or His promised judgment and reward. So, Noah condemned the world in their unbelief while modeling faith that believed God exists and trusted God's promised reward even when he couldn't see everything fully. Look at verses 8-10, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." Abraham's example is vital to this chapter, revealing a couple of things. First, it shows how Abraham also believed God exists and trusted God's promised reward by leaving his home for the land of promise. But second, it reveals Abraham sought a future reward beyond what his eyes could see. Note how we are shown this. In Genesis 12, God promised a physical land to Abraham, something His eyes would be able to see and his feet would be able to walk on. In one sense, that physical land was part of the inheritance Abraham, Isaac and Jacob believed in. Yet, notice how verse 9 speaks of them living in the land of promise "as in a foreign land, living in tents." Then, verse 10 looks beyond any physical land to a city designed and built by God, comparing living in tents to living in this city with foundations. This is so important to see. As Tom Schreiner says, "The land of Canaan points to something greater, something more profound and lasting than any location on earth. It points to the city of God. Abraham began to realize that there was something greater than Canaan awaiting him, that he would inherit the city of God." (Thomas R Schreiner, Hebrews, p. 351). "City" is a key term, because Scripture reveals it refers to the true Mount Zion and "heavenly Jerusalem" in Hebrews 12:22, and "new Jerusalem" described in Revelation 21. Family, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's true hope wasn't in the things of this world. The land of Canaan and the earthly city of Jerusalem were always just a shadow of God's future realities, the true city of God designed and built by God Himself. This brings me to the clarifying truth emphasized in verses 11-16,

### **God's Rewards Are Not Always as They Seem**

Verses 11-12 give one more example before verses 13-16 giving concluding remarks that set the stage for the rest of chapter 11. Look at verses 11-12, "By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." Abraham was around one hundred years old and Sarah around ninety when Sarah conceived Isaac. How was that possible? Sarah "received power to conceive" through faith in God's promised reward. And there are now as many descendants of Abraham as the stars of heaven and grains of sand. Yet, Scripture reveals these descendants are spiritual descendants from every nation, tongue and tribe. God's rewards are not always as they seem. Notice the concluding remarks in verses 13-16, "These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." The author of Hebrews surprisingly says, "these all died...not having received the things promised." This goes all the way back to Abel. Wait, is God not faithful to His promise?

No, because we discover they knew God's promise isn't primarily tied to the things of this earth. They knew they were strangers and exiles in this world. They were waiting for a heavenly country. And the reward of that country, which is God's all satisfying presence forever. So, on the one hand, God fulfilled promises, but on the other hand they did not receive the ultimate reward they were primarily trusting to receive. Now, move down to Hebrews 11:39-40. We don't have time to cover the whole chapter. But these verses come after describing more Old Testament saints like Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel, and others, even some not named trusting in God's promises. Yet, look at verses 39-40, "And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." Every Old Testament saint received approval from God because they believed He exists and rewards those who seek Him. But, like those previously mentioned, none received what was promised. What does that mean? Some lived in the promise land. David was king in Jerusalem. We have to note the significance of a repeated word in chapter 11 and all of Hebrews. Notice the repetition of the word "better" in verses 16 and 40. They desired a better country. God provided something better for us. Tom Schreiner comments, "The word "better" (κρείττονος) plays a major role in Hebrews: Jesus is better than angels (1:4); Melchizedek is better than Abraham (7:7); Jesus brings in a "better hope" (7:19) and a "better covenant" (7:22; 8:6) because he offered "better sacrifices" (9:23); Jesus' blood is "better" than Abel's (12:24). And fitting with this verse in particular, believers anticipate a "better possession" (10:34), and OT saints a "better resurrection" (11:35) and "something better" along with new covenant believers (11:40). The better homeland is the "city" God has prepared for His people. God is the builder of this city (11:10), and it is a heavenly city (12:22). The earthly city of man forecasts a far better heavenly city, the city of God (13:14)." No Old Testament saints received the ultimate promise in their lifetime, but their reward in Christ is something far better. God's promises are not always as they seem. So, what does this tell us for our response to this passage?

### **Faith Trusts God's Rewards are Far Greater than We Imagine**

Living by faith is trusting in all that God promises to be for us in Jesus Christ. This is a central aspect of the culture we desire at GracePoint. We desire to be a people who treasure the glory of Christ by trusting in His promised salvation, forgiveness, redemption and resurrection. We want to have an assurance and conviction that the reward of everlasting life with Him far outweighs any treasure in this life or tribulation we may experience. But we also want to trust that God's rewards now are better than what we can ask or think. His promises to heal and provide are real. His promise to be our refuge and shield in troubles will be fulfilled. Yet sometimes His peace in trials is better than removal from them. His comfort in suffering can be better than healing. His love is sweeter than our difficulties. And His presence through the Spirit is better than any earthly family or community.

### **Conclusion:**

As the worship team comes for our time of reflection and response, I want to encourage you to turn to the God who promises to reward those who seek Him. Study the rest of Hebrews 11 to see how God's people have always lived this way. And increase your assurance and conviction in God's promise to reward those who live this way. Don't just anchor your faith to what you can see. Anchor it to the unseen God who sustains everything by the word of His power and will reward those who believe He exists and trust in His promises. Would you pray with me as we prepare to respond?