

FAITH
Is Always
A Superior Principle
Hebrews 11:1- 40

Having Our Faith Focused on
the Superior Person of Christ

“FAITH AS A SUPERIOR PRINCIPLE.”

This chapter introduces the final section of the epistle

- Faith is a superior Principle (Heb. 11-13) – encourages us to put our trust in Christ. **Focusing on Jesus!**
- Christ as a superior Person (Heb. 1-6)
- Christ as a superior Priest (Heb. 7-10)

The epistle talks about Christians being tempted to go back into Judaism and put their faith in Moses. Their confidence was in the visible things of this world, not the invisible realities of God. Instead of going on to perfection (maturity), they were going “back to perdition [waste]” (Hebrew 6:1; Hebrews 10:39).

In Hebrews 11:1-40 all Christians are called to live by faith.

The chapter talks about two important topics relating to faith.

A. DESCRIPTION OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:1-3

Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. **2** For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony. **3** By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

This is not a definition of faith, but a description of what faith does and how it works.

- True Bible faith is not blind optimism or a manufactured “hope-so” feeling. It is not an intellectual assent to a doctrine. It is certainly not believing despite evidence! That would be superstition.
- *True Bible faith is confident obedience to God’s Word regardless of circumstances and consequences.*
- Read the last sentence again and let it sink into your mind and heart.

This faith operates quite simply like this:

- **God speaks and we hear His Word.**
- **We trust His Word and act on it** no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be.
- The circumstances may be impossible, and the consequences frightening and unknown; but we **obey** God's Word just the same and believe Him to do what is right and what is best.

Three words in **Heb. 11:1-3** summarize what true Bible faith is: *substance, evidence, and witness.*

- The word translated "***substance***" means literally "to stand under, to support."
- Faith is to a Christian what a foundation is to a house: it gives confidence and assurance that he will stand. So, you might say, "Faith is the confidence of things hoped for."
- When a believer has faith, it is God's way of giving him confidence and assurance that what is promised will be experienced.

- The word **evidence** simply means “conviction.” This is the inward conviction from God that what He has promised, He will perform. The presence of God-given faith in one’s heart is conviction enough that **He will keep His Word.**
- Witness (KJV - “obtained a good report”) is an important word in Heb. 11:1-40. It occurs not only in Heb. 11:2, but twice in Heb. 11:4, once in Heb. 11:5, and once in Heb. 11:39. The summary in Heb. 12:1 calls this list of men and women “so great a cloud of witnesses.” They are witnesses to us because God witnessed to them. In each example cited, God gave witness to that person’s faith. This witness was His divine approval on their lives and ministries.

The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that faith is a very practical thing (Heb. 11:3).

- Faith enables us to understand what God does.
- Faith enables us to see what others cannot see (Heb. 11:7, Heb. 11:13, Heb. 11:27).
- As a result, faith enables us to do what others cannot do!

People laughed at these great men and women when *they* stepped out by faith, but God was with them and enabled them to succeed to His glory.

The best way to grow in faith is to walk with the faithful.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a summary of the lives and labour of great men and women of faith found in the Old Testament. In each instance, you will find the same elements of faith:

- God spoke to them through His Word;
- They were stirred in different ways;
- They obeyed God;
- God witnessed about them.

B. DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:4- 40

Abel — Faith Worshiping (Hebrews 11:4).

Genesis 4:1-10. Abel was a righteous man because of faith (Matthew 23:35). God had revealed to Adam and his descendants the true way of worship, and Abel obeyed God by faith.

His obedience cost him his life. Cain was not a child of God (1John 3:12) because he did not have faith. He was religious but not righteous.

Abel speaks to us today as the first martyr of the faith.

Enoch — Faith Walking (Hebrews 11:5-6).

Our faith in God grows as we fellowship with God. We must have both the *desire* to please Him and the *diligence* to seek Him.

- Prayer, meditating on the Word, worship, discipline — all of these help us in our walk with God.
- Enoch walked with God in the wicked world, before the Flood came; he was able to keep his life pure. Enoch was taken to heaven one day (“translated” = “carried across”) and seen no more.

Abel died a violent death, but Enoch never died. God has a different plan for each one who trusts Him. Some see in the translation of Enoch a picture of the Rapture of the church when Jesus Christ returns (1Thes. 4:13-18).

- **Noah — Faith Working (Hebrews 11:7).**

- Noah's faith involved the whole person: his *mind* was warned of God; his *heart* was moved with fear; and his *will* acted on what God told him. Since nobody at that time had ever seen a flood (or perhaps even a rainstorm), Noah's actions must have generated a great deal of interest and probably ridicule as well. Noah's faith influenced his whole family, and they were saved. It also condemned the whole world, for his faith revealed their unbelief. Events proved that Noah was right! Jesus used this experience to warn people to be ready for His return (Matt. 24:36-42). In Noah's day, the people were involved in innocent everyday activities and completely ignored Noah's witness (2Pe. 2:5).

The Patriarchs — Faith Waiting (Hebrews 11:8-22).

Waiting is, for me, one of the most difficult disciplines of life. Yet true faith is able to wait for the fulfillment of God's purposes *in God's time*.

- But, while we are waiting, we must also be obeying. "By faith Abraham obeyed" (Heb.11:8). He obeyed when *he did not know where he was going* (Heb. 11:8-10). He lived in tents because he was a stranger and pilgrim in the world and had to be ready to move whenever God spoke.
- Abraham had his eyes on the heavenly city and lived "in the future tense."

The Patriarchs — Faith Waiting cont. (Hebrews 11:8-22).

- We have four generations of faith in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These men sometimes failed, but basically, they were men of faith. They were not perfect, but they were devoted to God and trusted His Word.
- Isaac passed the promises and the blessings along to Jacob (Gen. 27:1-46), and Jacob shared them with his twelve sons (Gen. 48-49).

- “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6). But this kind of faith grows as we listen to His Word (Rom. 10:17) and fellowship in worship and prayer.
- Faith is possible to all kinds of believers in all kinds of situations. It is not a luxury for a few “elite saints.” It is a necessity for all of God’s people. No wonder it is a “Superior Principle”
- Lord, increase our faith!

GOD DELIGHTS TO INCREASE THE FAITH OF HIS CHILDREN

Trials, difficulties and sometimes defeat, are the very food of faith...We should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love and care for us in developing more and more that faith which He is seeking to strengthen in us.

George Mueller.

FAITH THAT MOVE MOUNTAINS

Matthew 17:20

Faith in God is the instrument which enables men to remove the hills of difficulty which blocks their path

William Barclay

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