

The Hall of Fame of Faith..... 10 January 2010
Hebrews 11:1-7 **1001989**

These study notes are prayerfully prepared and provided to aid,
not replace, your personal study of the precious, inerrant Word of God.

A. W. Toner gives an eloquent portrait of Christians: *“A real Christian is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for One whom he has never seen, talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see, expects to go to heaven on the virtue of Another, empties himself in order to be full, admits he is wrong so he can be declared right, goes down in order to get up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest, and happiest when he feels worst. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, and knows that which passeth knowledge.”*

Today we come to Hebrews 11, a great Hall of Faith, reminders of those who Toner describes. Now let’s remember the context:

- 10:35 Do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward;
- 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you’ve done the will of God, you may receive what was promised;
- 10:39 We are not of those who shrink back, but those who have faith. Now faith comes to center stage.

“Shrinking back” is contagious. It is the complete opposite of enduring and is marked by pessimism, panic, doubt and insecurity. The importance of faith was made apparent by the writer of Hebrews in chapter 10. Now he proceeds to call for the appropriate response of faith when faced with trials. The thought of chapter 11 actually takes us back to Hebrews 6:11,12.

“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Hebrews 11 has been called the *“Westminster Abbey of Scripture”* because the heroes of the faith are enshrined here. It’s better however to see Hebrews 11 not as a tomb of dead people, but as a *“Parade of the Heroes of the Faith,”* or as a Showcase of the Trophies of Faith. Chapter 11 is the documentation of real life examples of enduring faith. Hebrews 11:2-32 gives 17 men and women from the creation to the prophets who endured. Vv 33-40 show events of general endurance with no names.

Chapter 11 is not so much a definition of faith as it is a documentation of examples of people who endured and did not shrink back. This chapter records the *“victories”* of faith. Remember the theme of Hebrews, *“better things for better living through the superior Christ!”* The process can be illustrated as follows:



Heb 11:1-3 **Opening Statement.** The writer gives three fundamental considerations concerning faith.
11:1 The Nature of faith. Faith is:
...The **assurance** of things hoped for. *“Assurance”* is *“the foundation, the substance, the*

guarantee,” like a document that attests ownership. The word means literally, to “stand under.” Hope in Scripture is never a wish, a dream or a fantasy. It is that settled assurance that God will do what He promises. It is a pointing to the future.

...The **evidence** of things not seen. “*Evidence*” refers to the “*legal proofs*”.

11:2 The nature of faith, v. 1, now verse 2, The ***Privilege of faith***. There is an honor associated with faith. The faith of the elders (“*the men of old, the Jewish forefathers*”) was observed and there was a witness (approval) given to it by God. These respected individuals gave testimony in their lives of the life of faith. They were given divine approval.

11:3 The nature of faith, the privilege of faith, now verse 3, The ***Perspective of faith***, that is, how faith sees things. Faith is the way to view all things. It is the instrument by which a believer sees the ages (universe) for what they are – created by the Word (rhema) of God.

Faith, then, is the “*attitude of heart, mind and will, which does what God says, believing that God will do what He says.*”

“*Faith is believing the unreasonable, the impossible, and the unexplainable because someone else, in whom we have absolute confidence has said it was so, and upon His word we believe, without asking any further proof.*” (M. R. DeHaan, *Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959, p. 150.)

Heb 11:4-7 Three Examples of Faith.

God gives us three examples of common, real people, who when under pressure, believed God. Abel, a shepherd, Enoch, a preacher, Noah a builder. They let faith dethrone doubt. And let’s note as well, the victory did not come the easy way to any of the examples in chapter 11. In every case, there was the sacrifice of self.

11:4 ***Abel, A Shepherd.***
Background.

Gen 1:28; 4:2a Abel kept sheep. (He had dominion, as commanded in 1:28). A common man, in a simple, serene, primitive time. No smog no clogged highways, no fighting for parking spaces.

Gen 3:17; 4:2b Cain, his brother, was a farmer. He tilled that which was cursed (3:17). He is described as “*evil*” (1 Jn 3:12). And notice that Cain became angry instead of wanting to please God. Abel’s sacrifice was offered in faith. God saw his sacrifice as an evidence of his faith.

Gen 4:4 Abel obeyed God, came God’s way. No doubt Cain was sincere, but sincerity alone is no substitute for obedience. Cain believed a lie, the lie that ‘*one way is as good as another.*’ Abel is an example of a righteous one (cf. 10:38). He recognized that man cannot have God’s ability until he is prepared to recognize the poverty of his own. Notice that God testified about his gifts, (11:4) not his character. That’s what the blood sacrifice teaches. You cannot have His ability for your problems until you are first ready to lay aside any dependence on your ability. Heb 12:24 reminds us that the work of Christ is superior, and that the sprinkled blood speaks better than the blood of Abel.

“Better” can mean more abundant, showing the abundant gratitude of Abel in his offering to the Lord.

Cain offered his sacrifice out of obligation without faith. But Abel while recognizing an obligation, offered his in faith. It was not the sacrifice, but the faith that produced obedience.

Abel shows that faith produces obedience, and that worship offered to God in faith is acceptable to Him.

Heb 10:38 Like Abel, we find acceptance before God on the basis of the better sacrifice of the New Covenant. Abel obtained testimony of his righteousness, and he still speaks! 1 Sam 15:22 “*Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.*”

Heb 11:5 **Enoch, A Preacher.**

Gen 5:21-24;
Jude 14,15

Background. Enoch was the 7th generation from Adam, according to Jude 14. In his *private life*, he walked with God after 65 years and the birth of Methuselah.

In his *public life*, he proclaimed a message of judgment that was resented and rejected by his people.

Gen 5:24 His lifestyle of fellowship with God was pleasing to God. “*Walked*” means fellowship with, and obedience to, God. One little girl once said, “*Enoch was a man who learned to walk with God, and they used to take long walks together. One day they walked so far that God said, ‘Look Enoch, it’s too far for you to go back; just come on home with me,’ So he walked on home with God.*” Ray Stedman, ***How to Live What You Believe***. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1974, p. 151).

Enoch lived in a corrupt age, a day headed for judgment by flood. But Enoch walked in accordance with the standards of God’s righteousness.

Heb 11:6 ***How faith works.***

Attitude of humble, absolute dependence on God.

Continued confidence that God exists.

Assurance that God keeps His Word, and does what He says.

Recall Psalm 27:4-5, seeking God. Seek means to search, to diligent search, to demand. There is an intensity in the word. Notice Gen 32:26. Why is faith a struggle? Is it a fear that God won’t come through? Or is it bitterness or anger? Or are we too proud, thinking we just don’t need God? Insecure, feel that God does not care?

Heb 11:6 To please God means walking with Him, and that means first of all to believe that God exists, and then believe that God will fellowship with those who by faith seek to please Him.

To please God is as simple as the baby steps of a toddler: first, we come to God, second, we believe that He is and is there. Third, we count on Him completely to keep His Word.

Heb 11:7 ***Noah, the Builder.***

Gen 6-9 ***Background.***

Noah was warned by God, prepared an ark in obedience to God, though he had never heard of rain, arks, or floods. And he built it a thousand times too big for his own family, and 500 miles from the nearest ocean. And then “*nutty Noah*” filled it with animals! And it took him over a hundred years to build it. Noah became an heir of righteousness, the kind that comes by faith – that is faith in Christ Jesus. Faith is acting on what God says.

Observe: Gen 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16: “*Thus Noah did: according to all that had commanded him; And Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him; as God had commanded Noah; as God had commanded him.*”

Lingering Lessons: *Faith-Action Reminders for you and me.*

If faith were the topic of conversation in your neighborhood or office, would your name be included?

If Hebrews 11 were updated in heaven, would your name be added?

The Christian cliché about being “*so heavenly minded that you’re no earthly good*” perhaps does not hold water! Our ability to be any earthly good for the cause of Christ is based entirely on what we know in our minds to be true about our “*heavenly*” position. Based on what is true from a heavenly perspective, we can live victoriously in this earthly realm.

Remember that faith:

- Heb 11:1 Involves confidence and conviction.
- Heb 11:1b Looks to the future.
- Heb 11:2,6 Is a prerequisite to pleasing God.
- Heb 11:6 Means focusing on God fully.
- Heb 11:1-7 Acts in obedience to God’s Word.

How’s your faith?

- Do you come God’s way, like Abel?
- Do you come proclaiming God’s Word, like Enoch?
- Do you fulfill God’s will, Noah’s way?

Whether we are making an offering to God, speaking out on His behalf, or obeying His Word, God looks for one thing: faith. Faith that’s willing to step out, seeking God’s arms rather than the embrace of the world.