

MEANING OF FAITH

Bible Background – HEBREWS 11:1-19

Printed Text – HEBREWS 11: 1-8, 13-16

Great Examples of Faith

¹ Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.

² Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

³ By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

⁴ It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel’s offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

⁵ It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—“he disappeared, because God took him.” For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God.

⁶ And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

⁷ It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸ It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.

¹³ All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.

¹⁴ Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own.

¹⁵ If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. ¹⁶ But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

Without faith in God, people hopelessly plod through life, dealing with life’s miseries as best they can. But with trust in God, there is faith that is the firm foundation that undergirds a life that is worth living. In the study of the lesson, we will learn of the contributions in the faith made by the heroes mentioned in Hebrews 11. We will also learn to appreciate those in our lives who act heroically through faith, while desiring to grow in our own potential to become faith heroes.

Background: To encourage his audience in the faith, the writer of Hebrews explained the superiority of faith by examples of people who demonstrated greater faith. Through examples in biblical history, faith is revealed through assurance in God’s future promises with the implications that inspire believers to persevere. Through the summary of Jewish history, the heroes of faith challenge believers to grow in faith and live in

obedience to God. In chapter 11, the writer of Hebrews uses a literary technique called anaphora, whereby he begins each account with the same Greek phrase translated, “By faith.” Hebrews 11 is a literary masterpiece and a historical retrospective. The chapter should be studied for the eternal principles it teaches and read simply for the beauty of the writing.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 571

Faith is Confidence and Certainty

Hebrews 11:1-3: Verse 1 of this passage is one of the most popular verses in Christianity. Yet, it is not so much a definition of what faith is, but a description of what faith does. The Greek word *hypostasis* that is translated as “substance” actually means “that which stands under.” It refers to the full expression or support of an idea or can also refer to the “foundation of a building.” Faith is the fundamental building block that supports hope and gives it meaning. The writer also describes faith as the evidence (Gk. *elegchos*) of things unseen. The meaning is not just “evidence” but scrutinized evidence that convicts. Therefore, faith acts as the undeniable or inscrutable evidence of the unseen. This faith is better demonstrated in our understanding that the universe was put in place by the Word of God. So, that which is unseen put all that we see and experience into being and is ultimately in control of the world. As believers we understand that God is working on our behalf even when we cannot see it. The “elders” are models of what having faith looks like and were commended for their faith.

◆*Do you have certain and confident faith in God’s promises? What promises of God do you hold most dear?*

Faith Rewarded

Hebrews 11:4-8: The writer continues offering examples of faith using key figures from the book of Genesis. He describes Abel as offering a better sacrifice than his brother Cain because Abel’s was offered in faith. And even though he was killed by his brother Cain, Abel’s faith continued to speak. Even though others may not recognize a believer’s sacrifice, God still sees and honors it, and nothing can prevent that sacrifice from having meaning. The next of the faithful mentioned is Enoch, who, as simply stated, pleased God. His faith pleased God so, that Enoch did not die, but was carried off to be with God. Enoch was one of only two biblical characters recorded to have not seen death (Gen. 5:21-24).

Noah was moved to build an ark even though there had never before, in the history of man till that point, been a reason to build a ship of that magnitude. He was obedient to God’s message and Noah’s family was saved because of his faith. Even though Noah did not know the exact outcome of events, he was willing to be an instrument of God’s justice in the world. He kept on trusting God and ordered his actions according to his faith. Likewise, Abraham’s faith is expressed in terms of obedience and trust. He allowed God to lead him even in times of uncertainty. His faith was not in knowing how God would accomplish His promises but in knowing that God would.

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Without faith, it is impossible to please God (v.6) since faith is the very foundation for hope and the inscrutable convincing evidence for the unseen. Faith is essential for believers in a world that consistently attempts to crush hope. Faith is necessary for belief in the existence of God. Faith is important for the expectation of God as a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

◆*Faith is the beginning of our relationship with God. What qualities of faith are necessary to continue to grow and strengthen our relationship with God?*

Unfulfilled Hope in Things Unseen

Hebrews 11:13-16: The writer acknowledges that the examples of heroes of faith died in faith without actually seeing what they had hoped for. The life of the faithful is portrayed as those who choose to focus not on what is behind but what is set before them, hoping for better things. They are looking for a better land. This better land is beyond the Promised Land of Canaan, or even a modern Western idea of a nation-state. The land that holds fulfillment of our faith exists outside of the limitations of time, space, and any place of human design. The focus of the heroes was never the realization of earthly promises. Instead, they looked forward to becoming heirs of righteousness (V.7).

◆*What gave our faithful ancestors hope even though they were “strangers and pilgrims”?*

Conclusion

Homelessness, unemployment, sickness, and natural disasters destroy homes and lives. While things don't appear to improve, it is important to not lose hope. God is always present, and we can rely on Him to bring positive change in our lives. Although many people in our society have given up hope, it is important for believers to remember that faith in God is the foundation for hope. It is our mission to help those who are in despair to acquire this faith and restore their hope.

Source:

Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Love For One Another. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Summer Quarter), 567-578. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.

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Lesson for Next Week – August 15, 2021 – Study Guide 11

A PERSERVERING FAITH

Bible Background ♦ HEBREWS 10:19-39

Printed Text ♦ HEBREWS 10:23-36

Devotional Reading ♦ PSALM 40:1-13

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Save Your Life by Losing It
(Mark 8:31-37)

TUESDAY

Respond to Abusers with Blessings
(1 Peter 3:9-19)

WEDNESDAY

Be Faithful Until Death
(Revelation 2:8-11)

THURSDAY

Sanctified by Christ's Sacrifice
(Hebrews 10:1-10)

FRIDAY

The Inner Life of New Believers
(Hebrews 10:11-18)

SATURDAY

Approach God with a Pure Heart
(Hebrews 10:19-22)

SUNDAY

Act in Ways That Preserve the Faith
(Hebrews 10:23-36)