

A Necessary Faith

Heb 11:1-8, 13-16

SS Lesson for 08/08/2021

Devotional Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-9

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Heb 11:1

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

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Hope that should be held unswervingly (Heb 10:23)

Hope in the glory of God (Rom 5:2)

Hope that will not disappoint (Rom 5:5)

Hope that provides salvation (Rom 8:23-25)

Hope found in the Scriptures (Rom 15:4)

Hope that makes us bold (2 Cor 3:10-12)

Hope into which we are called (Eph 4:4)

Hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7)

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A testimony that is given by the Holy Spirit (Matt 10:19-20)

A testimony that cannot be resisted or contradicted (Luke 21:14-15)

A testimony full of grace (Col 4:6)

A testimony that instructs in the hope that God changes those who oppose Him (2 Tim 2:25-26)

Faith understands how the world was created (3)

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A creation that was formed out of water (2 Peter 3:3-7)

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Enoch's faith allowed him to prophesy (Jude 14-15)

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A faith that pleases God even to the point of death (Rev 2:10)

A faith that pleases God, not man (1 Thess 2:4)

A faith that pleases God by living a life worthy of God (Col 1:10)

A faith that pleases God by being a faithful servant (Matt 25:21)

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Noah's faith allowed him to be found righteous in God's sight (Gen 7:1)

Noah's faith caused him to diligently build the ark (1 Peter 3:20)

Noah's faith resulted in God protecting him and his family during the flood (2 Peter 2:5)

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Abraham's faith allowed him to receive God's promises (Rom 4:13)

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Abraham's faith resulted in obedience (Acts 7:2-8)

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- Promises for those who are called by God (Heb 9:15)
- Promises of eternal life (1 John 2:25)

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- Creation Faith
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CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Older commentaries on Hebrews focus on a limited set of questions regarding authorship, recipients, and its worthiness to be considered Scripture. For example, a well-known commentary published in 1876 made an extended argument for authorship by the apostle Paul, a position held by almost no one in our own day. The author went on to assert with confidence that the letter was addressed to Jewish converts to Christianity in Palestine. Finally, the writer argued for the book's inclusion in Scripture on four bases: it (1) was written by Paul, (2) was quoted as Scripture, (3) is found in the oldest versions of Scripture, and (4) features internal evidences for such inclusion (namely, its teaching is in harmony with the rest of Scripture). With the passing of a century and a half since publication of that commentary, we can assert that we know both more and less about the background of Hebrews than we did then. Modern commentaries reflect the wealth of knowledge that we now have about the Jewish and Greek cultural, philosophical, and religious environment in which the letter was written. All of this enriches our understanding of the letter, but gets us no closer to an answer to some of the most basic questions that we still have. Chief among those is the question of who wrote it. Even though no author is specified, a better understanding of the contexts mentioned above and of the rhetorical skill that lies behind the composition of the letter tells us a lot about the author. The person was educated, based on the quality of the Greek writing. The author also knew Greek culture and philosophy, interacting with both in argument and examples. Although Hebrews 11 is often treated as a standalone unit of Scripture, it is important to note that the writer of the letter has been building toward it by the time it is reached. Although we do not cover them in today's lesson, the themes of faith and patient endurance, touched on in Hebrews 10:35-39, provide the launching point for the discussion of faith in chapter 11. We can see the author building on the idea of faith as pilgrimage as far back as chapters 3 and 4. With that, we turn to the text.

Key Verse: Heb 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

11:1-3. In a brief Prologue the author set forth three fundamental considerations about faith: its basic nature, the honor associated with it, and its way of seeing things. In its essence **faith is being sure** (*hypostasis*, rendered "being" in reference to God in 1:3)... **and certain** (*elenchos*, from the verb *elenchō*, "to prove or convince") about unseen hopes and realities. That this is honorable is seen in the fact that Old Testament worthies, **the ancients, were commended for it.** **Faith** is also a way of viewing all experience

since it is the way in which believers see **the universe** (*tous aiōnas*, lit., “the ages,” also rendered “the universe” in 1:2) for what it is—a creation by God.

11:4. Abel represents the **righteous man** referred to in 10:38, whose acceptance before God was based on a superior sacrifice. Like Abel, the readers found acceptance before God on the basis of the better sacrifice of the New Covenant. Their unbelieving brethren, like **Cain**, found no such divine approbation. Even death does not extinguish the testimony of a man like Abel.

11:5-6. **Enoch**, on the other hand, reflected the kind of life that pleases God since he walked with God by faith (as the readers also should). If Christ had come in their lifetimes (cf. 10:37), the readers also would **not** have experienced **death**. In any case they could only please God by continued confidence that **He exists and... rewards those who earnestly seek Him**.

11:7. That God does reward those who seek Him is suggested by the career of **Noah**, who became an heir of righteousness by faith. What he inherited was, in fact, the new world after the Flood as the readers might inherit “the world to come” (cf. 2:5). The reference here to Noah saving his household recalls the writer’s stress on a Christian’s salvation-inheritance. It further suggests that a man’s personal **faith** can be fruitful in his family, as they share it together.

11:8-10. That the readers should look forward to “the world to come” and treat their present experience as a pilgrimage is a lesson enforced by the life of **Abraham**. This great patriarch lived **like a stranger** in a land **he would later receive as his inheritance**. So also would the readers inherit if they, like this forefather, kept **looking forward to the city with foundations**, a reference to the heavenly and eternal Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:2, 9-27).

11:11-12. The NIV introduces the word **Abraham** into these verses. But its marginal reading is preferable: “By faith even Sarah, who was past age, was enabled to bear children because she...” The NIV interpretation is influenced by the opinion that the phrase **to become a father** (*eis katabolēn spermatos*) can refer only to the male parent, but this need not be so. The writer here chose to introduce his first heroine of faith, one who was able to overlook the physical limitation of her own barrenness to become a fruitful mother. Since “she considered Him faithful who had promised” (NASB) so also should the readers (cf. 10:23). Her **faith** in fact, contributed to the startling multiplication of her husband’s seed, when old Abraham was **as good as dead**.

11:13-16. In an impressive summary of his discussion thus far, the writer pointed out that people can be **still living by faith** when they die, even if by that time they do **not receive the things promised**. By faith the old saints saw the promised realities **from a distance** and persisted in their pilgrim character, **looking for a country of their own** and refusing to **return** to the land they had left. So too the readers should renounce the **opportunity** to go back to any form of their ancestral religion and should persist in **longing for a better country—a heavenly one**. If they did so they, like the patriarchs, would be people with whom **God would not be ashamed** to be associated.

11:17-19. The theme of testing emerges here as the writer returned to **Abraham**. The readers can learn from that supreme test in which the patriarch was called on **to sacrifice his... son**. Though this seemed to contradict the divine promise, Abraham was able to rise above the trial and trust in the resurrecting power of God. So also Christian readers must sometimes look beyond the experiences of life, in which God’s promises do not seem to be fulfilled, and realize that their resurrections will bring those promises to fruition.

11:20-22. The patriarchs mentioned here likewise looked to the future in **faith**. **Isaac**, trusting God to fulfill His promises to Abraham and his descendants, pronounced blessings on his own two sons **Jacob and Esau** regarding **their future**. So did **Jacob** in regard to **Joseph’s sons**, which was for him an act of faith in his old age. The readers too were to maintain their worship right to the end of life, persevering in faith in the future that God had foretold. **Joseph** too, nearing death, expressed confidence that God would in the future deliver **the Israelites from Egypt**. In similar fashion all believers should, in genuine faith, have confidence in the future of God’s people.

11:23. With this transition to the life of **Moses**, the writer began to focus on the way faith confronts opposition and hostility, a subject familiar to his readers. It was **by faith** that Moses was hidden by his **parents** and his life was thus preserved. The phrase **because they saw he was no ordinary child** might be better read, “because they saw he was a beautiful child.” (“Beautiful” is the Gr. *asteion*, which occurs in the NT only here and in Acts 7:20, which also refers to Moses.) Delighted by the precious gift of a son which

God had given them, they evidently believed God had something better for this lovely baby than death. Not fearing Pharaoh's **edict**, they kept him alive, and God rewarded their faith by their son's illustrious career.

11:24-26. In a classic presentation of the way faith chooses between the attractive but temporary **pleasures of sin** and the prospect of **disgrace for the sake of Christ**, the writer showed **Moses** to be a real hero of faith who had an intelligent regard for the eschatological hopes of the nation of Israel. The readers also were to accept "disgrace" and reject "the pleasures of sin," and they would do so if they, like Moses, anticipated their **reward**.

11:27-28. Moreover, at the time of the Exodus, Moses was undeterred by fear of **the king's anger**. By keeping **the Passover**, which included the **sprinkling of blood**, the nation avoided God's judgment. In the same way, the readers should not be afraid of human wrath and should maintain their separateness from the surrounding world. They should persist in the worship experience made possible by the blood of the New Covenant. If they would do so, they would not fall under divine retribution (cf. 10:19-31).

11:29-31. The readers could also look forward to victory over their enemies (cf. 1:13-14). They could learn from the destruction of **the Egyptians** and the collapse of **the walls of Jericho** what triumphs faith can win over its adversaries. If, as seems probable, there were a few Gentiles in the church that received this letter, they could take comfort from the experience of **the prostitute Rahab**, a Gentile who was spared when Jericho was conquered.

11:32-35a. There were far too many heroes of faith for the writer to deal with them all in detail. Swiftly he mentioned the variegated accomplishments of some of them. At the climax of this list stand **women who received back their dead, raised to life again**—a truly superlative victory of faith which does not allow death to defeat it (cf. 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37).

11:35b-38. In a swift transition of thought, the writer moved from faith's obvious triumphs to what seemed to be its defeats. But these defeats were only apparent, not real. Those who **were tortured and refused to be released** did so because they knew their sufferings would lead to a richer and **better resurrection** experience. So the readers might also endure suffering staunchly and expect reward in the future world. Indeed, all manner of physical suffering (vv. 36-37, 38b cite about a dozen kinds of persecution) has been endured by people of faith, as well as ostracism from their homes and countries, treatment that the readers might also have to endure. But in a lovely touch, the writer commented that **the world was not worthy** of those whom it banished.

11:39-40. In a concluding summary the writer pointed out that the great heroes of faith he had spoken of had not yet realized their eschatological hopes. This fact shows that **God had planned something better for them and us**. It is indeed "better for us" that the future hopes they strove toward be delayed, since only thus could believers enjoy the present experience of becoming companions of the Messiah who leads them to glory. As a result, the perfecting (cf. 10:14; 12:23) of the Old Testament worthies—that is, the realization of their hopes—awaits that of all believers

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Characteristics of Faith (Heb 11:1-3)

1 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.

Faith has hope (1)

Hope that anchors the soul (Heb 6:18-20)

18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Hope that should be held unswervingly (Heb 10:23)

23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Hope in the glory of God (Rom 5:2)

2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Hope that will not disappoint (Rom 5:5)

5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Hope that provides salvation (Rom 8:23-25)

24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Hope found in the Scriptures (Rom 15:4)

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Hope that makes us bold (2 Cor 3:10-12)

10 For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. 11 And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! 12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

Hope into which we are called (Eph 4:4)

4 There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-

Hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7)

7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Faith produces a good testimony (2)

A testimony giving the reason for hope (1 Peter 3:15)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

A testimony that is given by the Holy Spirit (Matt 10:19-20)

19 do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

A testimony that cannot be resisted or contradicted (Luke 21:14-15)

14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

A testimony full of grace (Col 4:6)

6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

A testimony that instructs in the hope that God changes those who oppose Him (2 Tim 2:25-26)

25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Faith understands how the world was created (3)

A creation that was accomplished by the Word of God (Ps 33:6-9)

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

A creation where the Trinity was present (John 1:1-3)

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

A creation in which from one man God created every nation (Acts 17:22-28)

23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. 24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

A creation where God's invisible qualities are displayed (Rom 1:19-20)

19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

A creation that was done through Jesus (Heb 1:1-3)

1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

A creation that was formed out of water (2 Peter 3:3-7)

3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

A creation formed by the Will of God (Rev 4:11)

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Examples of Faith (Heb 11:4-8)

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But 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 diligently seek Him.

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Abel (4)

Abel's faith caused God to look on his offering with favor (Gen 4:3-5)

3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Abel's faith was not like Cain's, who was disobedient and rebellious (Jude 8-11)

8 In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. 9 But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" 10 Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals-these are the very things that destroy them. 11 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

Abel's faith still is manifested today (Heb 12:24)

24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Enoch (5)

Enoch's faith allowed him to walk with God (Gen 5:22-24)

22 And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. 24 Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

Enoch's faith allowed him to prophesy (Jude 14-15)

14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones 15 to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

A faith that pleases God (6)

A faith that pleases God because we have been given a trust (1 Cor 4:2)

2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

A faith that pleases God even to the point of death (Rev 2:10)

10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

A faith that pleases God, not man (1 Thess 2:4)

4 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.

A faith that pleases God by living a life worthy of God (Col 1:10)

10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

A faith that pleases God by being a faithful servant (Matt 25:21)

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Noah (7)

Noah's faith caused him to do everything God commanded (Gen 6:22)

22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

Noah's faith allowed him to be found righteous in God's sight (Gen 7:1)

1 The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.

Noah's faith caused him to diligently build the ark (1 Peter 3:20)

20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

Noah's faith resulted in God protecting him and his family during the flood (2 Peter 2:5)

5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;

Abraham (8)

Abraham's faith was credited as righteousness (Rom 4:1-3)

4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-but not before God. 3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Abraham's faith allowed him to receive God's promises (Rom 4:13)

13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

Abraham's faith persuaded him that God had power to do what He promised (Rom 4:20-21)

20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

Abraham's faith resulted in obedience (Acts 7:2-8)

The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. 3 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.' 4 "So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. 5 He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. 6 God spoke to him in this way: 'Your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 7 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,' God said, 'and afterward they will come out of that country and worship me in this place.' 8 Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision.

The Goal of Faith (Heb 11:13-16)

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Fulfilled promises (13)

Promises of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ezek 36:25-27)

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Promises that are "yes" in Jesus (2 Cor 1:20)

20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Promises that are better through the new covenant of Jesus (Heb 8:6)

6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

Promises for those who are called by God (Heb 9:15)

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Promises of eternal life (1 John 2:25)

25 And this is what he promised us — even eternal life.

A prepared eternal home (14-16)

A home where the former things will be gone (Isa 65:17-18)

17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

A home that will endure (Isa 66:22-23)

22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure. 23 From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the Lord.

A home that will be the home of the righteous (2 Peter 3:13)

13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

A home replacing the one destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:7)

7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

A home renewed from the one that will be laid bare (2 Peter 3:10)

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

A Progressive Definition and Description of Faith in Verses 1-6

Verse 1 of chapter 11 sets out a rather general, preliminary, definition of faith:

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see ([Hebrews 11:1](#)).

Here the author begins by giving us a two-fold description of what faith is certain about. These two aspects of faith are very much inter-related. Faith pertains to things that we hope for, and things which we cannot see. This definition of faith is broad enough to include what we might call secular "faith," as well as Christian faith. An unsaved co-worker might have faith in his training or work skills, confident that his or her hope of a promotion will be realized. Gamblers exercise a sort of distorted "faith." Those who trust in false religions do so with a kind of faith, but sadly their faith is ill-founded.

Christian faith is convinced about the things for which we hope, things which God has promised that we will obtain in the future. These are things for which the Christian eagerly awaits. There is the "blessed hope"¹² of our Lord's return and all that it will accomplish. There is the hope of the resurrection of the dead.¹³ There is the hope of our adoption as sons and the redemption of our body.¹⁴ Here are but two of the many texts¹⁵ which speak to Christians about our hope as believers in Jesus:

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers together until now. 23 Not only this, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with endurance ([Romans 8:22-25](#)).

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 that is, into an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is reserved in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are protected through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 This brings you great joy, although you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials. 7 Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold – gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away – and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 You have not seen him, but you love him. You do not see him now but you believe in him, and so you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, 9 because you are attaining the goal of your faith – the salvation of your souls ([1 Peter 1:3-9](#)).

Faith is our confidence regarding those things which God has promised, for which we hope, but since these things are future and are spiritual, they are things we cannot see with the human eye.

24 For in hope we were saved. Now **hope that is seen is not hope**, because who hopes for what he sees? 25 **But if we hope for what we do not see**, we eagerly wait for it with endurance (Romans 8:24-25, emphasis mine).

Faith is confident in unseen things, assured that they are, or will become, a reality. One might even say that the unseen things of which we are assured in Scripture are the ultimate reality:

17 For our momentary, light suffering is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison 18 **because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal** (2 Corinthians 4:17-18, emphasis mine).

6 Therefore we are always full of courage, and we know that as long as we are alive here on earth we are absent from the Lord – 7 **for we live by faith, not by sight**. 8 Thus we are full of courage and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-8, emphasis mine).

In verse 2, our author underscores the fact that faith is a crucial part of one's relationship to God; indeed, it is the only basis for our relationship to God.

For by it [faith] the people of old received God's commendation (Hebrews 11:2).

Faith in God is the basis for man's approval and commendation by God.

Verse 6 follows up with this bold statement:

Now without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6, emphasis mine).

There is no other way to approach or to please God than to come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death in our place. This faith by which we are saved is faith alone, not faith mixed with our works (see Titus 3:3-7).¹⁶

Though it is not a part of our text for this message, I would point out that the author is going to continue to expand this definition of faith as the chapter continues to unfold. The next major expansion will come in verses 13-16.

Examples of Faith

Creation Faith

Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand that the worlds were set in order at God's command, so that the visible has its origin in the invisible (Hebrews 11:3).

This first example of faith at work comes as a surprise to me. It is the first of 18 examples introduced by the words, **"by faith."** All the other examples are of Old Testament saints, but this example is one that includes the readers. **"By faith we understand that the worlds were set in order. . . ."** In every other example, the individual(s) mentioned express their faith in a particular set of circumstances, circumstances that we will not experience in that precise form. But every single Christian is called upon to exercise their faith by being firmly convinced that all creation is the handiwork of God. We really have no other choice from Scripture:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. 2 The Word was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created (John 1:1-3).

16 For all things in heaven and on earth were created by him – all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers – all things were created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him (Colossians 1:16-17).

1 After God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets, 2 in these last days he has spoken to us in a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world (Hebrews 1:1-2).¹⁷

We can easily see how faith in creation as God's handiwork fits the definition of faith that has just been set forth in verse 1. Faith is confident that the creation we see is really the product of what isn't seen. Namely, creation is the work of our unseen God. Furthermore, if our world was created out of nothing, then the things that are now seen originated from what was not seen.

Why is the creation of our universe so important? Let me suggest at least two reasons. *First, the first thing we are told in the Bible is that God created this world (Genesis 1:1ff.).* Faith believes God by believing His Word. So believing faith begins at Genesis 1:1 and keeps believing through the Bible to Revelation 22:21. *Second, the good news of the gospel begins at creation.* It was not necessary for the apostles to emphasize the fact that God created the heavens and the earth because Jews believed that God created the world. Thus, the gospel presentation usually began with God's covenant promise to Abraham and the prophecies pertaining to the Messiah. But when the gospel was preached to Gentiles, it became necessary to begin with creation, for that is where it begins in the Bible. And so we read,

24 **The God who made the world and everything in it, who is Lord of heaven and earth,** does not live in temples made by human hands, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives life and breath and everything to everyone. 26 **From one man he made every nation of the human race to inhabit the entire earth,** determining their set times and the fixed limits of the places where they would live, 27 so that they would search for God and perhaps grope around for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 For in him we live and move about and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.' 29 So since we are God's offspring, we should not think the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image made by human skill and imagination. 30 Therefore, although God has overlooked such times of ignorance, he now commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has set a day on which he is going to judge the world in righteousness, by a man whom he designated, having provided proof to everyone by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:24-31, emphasis mine).

While we do not have time to explore the implications of creation being a matter of faith in this lesson, I would recommend that the reader give this matter some thought. Surely this truth has implications for apologetics, as well as for evangelism. If creationism is a matter of faith, then we must recognize that we can pile up fact after fact, and without faith, it will not convince the lost. Since faith is a gift from God, we must look to Him to give men the faith to believe that creation is His work. We will no more argue someone into belief in creationism than we will argue them into the kingdom of God. But since faith is God's work, we can pray that He will open men's hearts to truth in Him, and thus, to believe what the Bible says of Him.

Abel's Faith

Hebrews 11:4

4 By faith Abel offered God a greater sacrifice than Cain, and through his faith he was commended as righteous, because God commended him for his offerings. And through his faith he still speaks, though he is dead (Hebrews 11:4).

And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks of something better than Abel's does (Hebrews 12:24).

1 Now the man had marital relations with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. Then she said, "I have created a man just as the Lord did!" 2 Then she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel took care of the flocks, while Cain cultivated the ground. 3 At the designated time Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground for an offering to the Lord. 4 But Abel brought some of the firstborn of his flock – even the fattest of them. And the Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering, 5 but with Cain and his offering he was not pleased. So Cain became very angry, and his expression was downcast. 6 Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why is your expression downcast? 7 Is it not true that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must subdue it." 8 Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him (Genesis 4:1-8),

So that on you will come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar (Matthew 23:35).

It seems to me that we must begin by recognizing that Scripture does not necessarily report everything that God may have revealed to an Old Testament saint.¹⁸ When we read these words of our Lord in John 8, we recognize that God may have revealed more to Abraham than what is recorded in the Bible:

"Your father Abraham was overjoyed to see my day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56).

Here is what we do know from Scripture regarding Cain and Abel and their sacrifices. Cain offered a sacrifice from the "**fruit of the ground**"; Abel offered a blood sacrifice from the firstborn of his flock. God was pleased with Abel, *and* with his sacrifice, but He was not pleased with Cain *and* his sacrifice. In other words, the problem wasn't just with the offering, but with the offerer. Just as God made it plain to Abel that He approved

of him and his offering, so He also let Cain know His dissatisfaction with him *and* with his sacrifice. Cain responded to God's displeasure in anger. God sought him out and told him that if he did "what was right" all would be fine. In other words, we may not know precisely what was wrong with Cain and his offering (though we have a pretty good idea), but Cain knew what he should do and refused to do it. Instead, he lured his brother to a place where he killed him. The point our author does not wish us to miss is that Abel was acceptable because of his faith.

It is the author's last words about Abel that are most interesting to me: "**And through his faith he still speaks, though he is dead**" (verse 4). Chapter 11 is emphatic in its teaching that death is not the termination of life for the people of faith. As we shall soon see in verses 13-16, the Old Testament saints died, assured that they would even yet receive the promises God had made to them. This certainty of eternal life after death is further exemplified by the actions of the patriarchs at the time of their deaths (verses 17-22).

I think the author has something more for us in his declaration that Abel still speaks to us. The fact that the story of Abel's acceptance is recorded in Scripture, and now that his example is called to mind many years after his death, calls attention to the great impact living by faith can have on others – even those who are living long after our death. Think about it for a moment. Think about all the examples in [Hebrews 11](#) that inspire us to live by faith. Think of all those who have lived after the close of the Old Testament canon, all those men and women in church history whose example encourages us. These people still minister to us. I am reminded of Paul's words in [Romans 15](#):

For everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through encouragement of the scriptures we may have hope ([Romans 15:4](#)).

Much of this encouragement to persevere comes from godly men and women who persevered by faith.

Enoch's Faith

Hebrews 11:5-6

5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he did not see death, and he was not to be found because God took him up. For before his removal he had been commended as having pleased God. 6 Now without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him ([Hebrews 11:5-6](#)).

18 When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. . . . 21 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. 22 After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God for 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 23 The entire lifetime of Enoch was 365 years. 24 Enoch walked with God, and then he disappeared because God took him away ([Genesis 5:18, 21-24](#)).

14 Now Enoch, the seventh in descent beginning with Adam, even prophesied of them, saying, "Look! The Lord is coming with thousands and thousands of his holy ones, 15 to execute judgment on all, and to convict every person of all their thoroughly ungodly deeds that they have committed, and of all the harsh words that ungodly sinners have spoken against him" ([Jude 14-15](#)).

We would do well to recall that Enoch lived during some very dark days, days that preceded the flood, days that necessitated the flood. If I am reading correctly, Noah is Enoch's great grandson.¹⁹ The description of man's sinfulness in the early verses of [Genesis 6](#) explains why universal judgment is required and why only righteous Noah and his family are spared.

It is also important to notice that while Abel died because of his faith, Enoch was spared from death because of his faith. I have already made this point earlier, but I will repeat it (because it is so often denied by certain preachers): faith does not guarantee that we will not suffer. Faith does guarantee that God will declare us righteous, and thus we are assured of possessing all that God has promised those who possess eternal life. As we see in [Hebrews 11:32-38](#), some were rescued or experienced God's earthly blessings because of faith, while others suffered greatly on earth because of their faith. But all received God's approval, and all will experience God's eternal blessings (11:13-16, 39-40).

Notice this about Enoch. While the writer to the Hebrews underscores the fact that Enoch was "**taken up**" to heaven because of his faith, he does not identify or call attention to any particular action on Enoch's part that resulted in God's declaration of his righteousness. He simply declares that God took Enoch up after He bore witness to the fact that he was pleasing to God. From the account in [Genesis 5](#), we learn that Enoch "**walked with God,**" and thus God "**took him away**" ([Genesis 5:24](#)). Enoch's faith, then, was evident by his consistent godly lifestyle while dwelling in a wicked culture, one that was soon to be wiped out because of its depravity.

And while Enoch's being taken up is surely exceptional, it does foreshadow the heavenly future of every believer:

15 For we tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then **we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, emphasis mine).

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/25-chapter-11-right-you-hebrews-111-6>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The apostle Paul wrote "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). We sometimes undervalue the role of imitation in spiritual maturity. Perhaps you don't feel confident enough to invite others to use your life as a model for their own discipleship. Wouldn't it be arrogant to do so? Paul didn't see it that way, and neither did the other apostles (compare 1 Peter 5:3). All of us can think of others—ministers, Sunday school teachers, ordinary congregants—who were influential in teaching us and molding us in the life of faith. We too are called to live in such a way that we can add our names to the list of "the righteous one[s] [who] will live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38).

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

True Biblical Faith - When we believe, we are confident in God's Word and choose to obey. This kind of belief doesn't rely on circumstances or outcomes. God speaks; we listen and step out on faith. This kind of belief system says I'm convinced, period. For example, looking forward to being home in heaven with God forever seems unbelievable. But by faith, Christians choose to stand on God's promise that one day, all of His children will be with Him forever in heaven. Hebrews 11 offers a description of faith and outlines several biblical examples. Neither is it an intellectual agreement. The type of faith that God desires in Jesus' disciples is an assurance that confidently says, "I hear God's Word, and I am persuaded to believe it, no matter what." It's not stepping into the unknown, though what we're talking about is not visible to the naked eye. The first part of Hebrews 11 speaks about faith as having substance, evidence, and witnesses. Faith is to a Christian what a foundation is to a house. It will stand. When a believer has faith, he has God's confidence and assurance.

Some Examples - The writer of Hebrews lined up several biblical characters in chapter 11 to highlight their faith. Abel was a righteous man who obeyed God concerning sacrificing and worship. Enoch walked with God despite the wickedness all around him. Before the flood, he kept his life upright with God. God allowed him to go to heaven without dying. Noah acted by faith and did what God told him to do despite what others said. When Noah built a boat for a coming flood, people laughed at him. Abraham obeyed God, seeking after a country God told him about, but of which he had no foreknowledge. He demonstrated great faith. God commended each of these people listed in Hebrew 11 for believing His Word without great evidence.

Our Eternal Home - God has a place prepared for His family. He also has in mind a specific time when He's going to wrap it all up down here on earth. Christians rest in His promise of this beautiful, permanent home with Him forever.