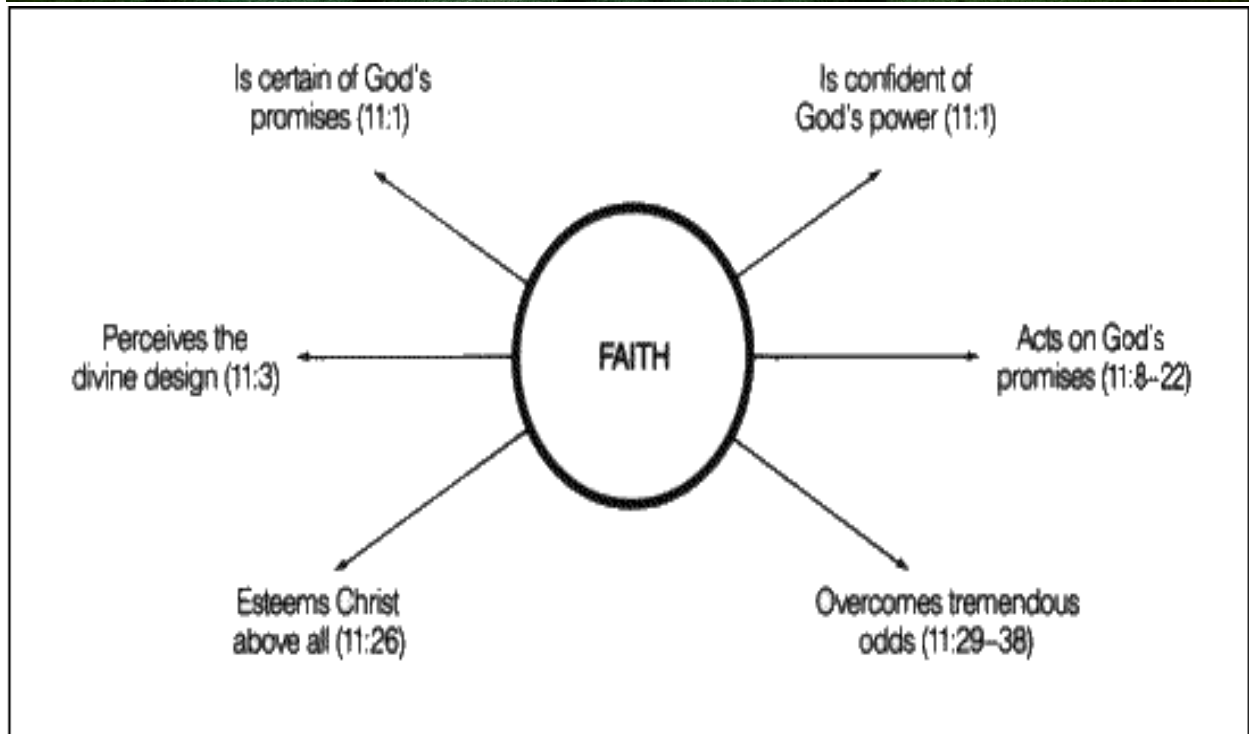


# The Faith Chapter @Hebrews 11

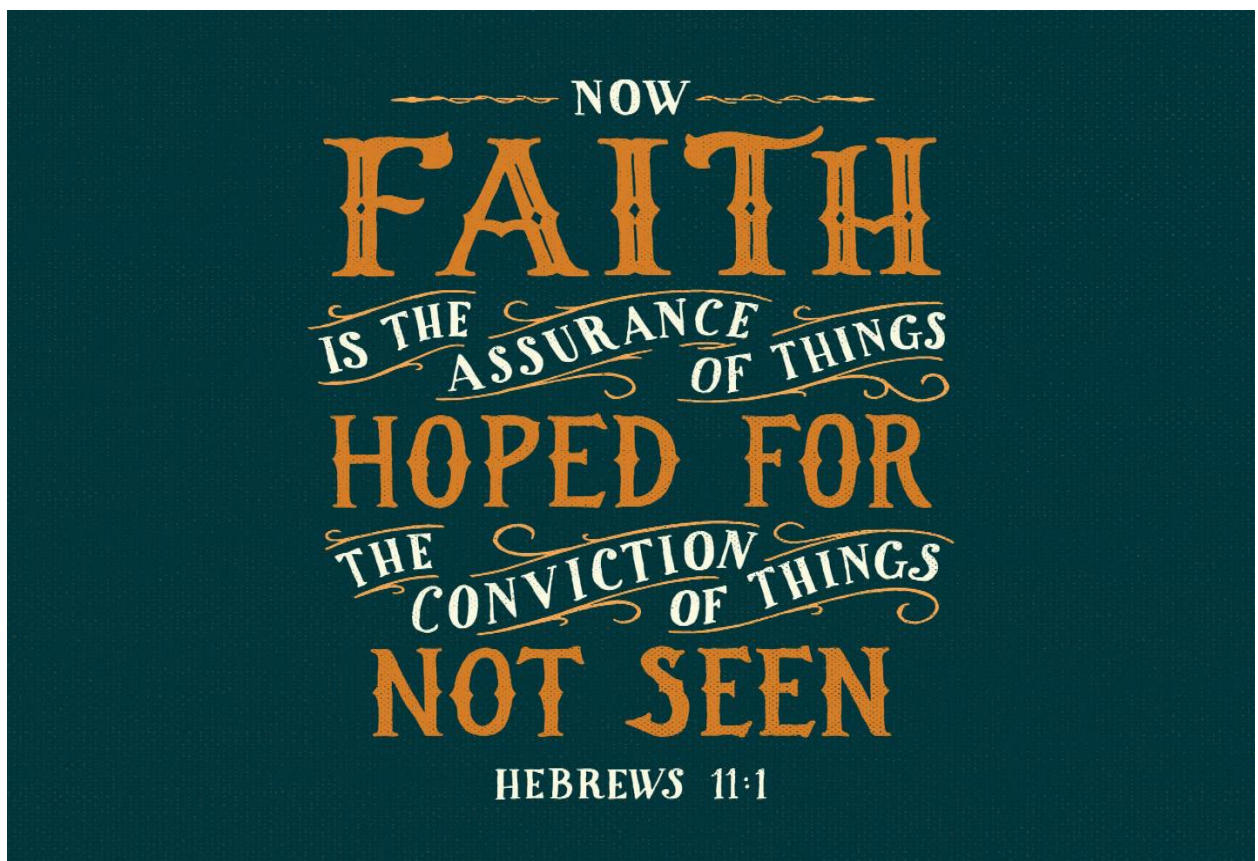
by David Lee Burris





**Hebrews 11:1-3 (KJV)**

- 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 report.
- 3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.





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**The writer of Hebrews concluded chapter 10 reminding his audience that the righteous live by faith, not by what's seen. Furthermore, those who give up and shrink back will be destroyed by God. But those who have endurance and keep their faith will preserve their souls. The writer states with confidence that we are those who have faith. In chapter 11 the writer of Hebrews is going to tell us what faith looks like**

**It is fascinating to see how many misconceptions of faith exist considering that Hebrews 11 gives a great explanation of faith and what faith looks like. Some think of faith as having any sort of spirituality. We hear language today that there are many faiths. Some understand faith as having the belief that something good is going to happen to them (the popular teachings of Joel Osteen). Some think of faith as something that is blind, that is, taking a blind leap against known facts. None of these are descriptions of biblical faith.**

**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. (11:1-2; ESV)**

**Here are a few translations to help us get our minds around what the writer is teaching us about faith.**

**Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (NIV/TNIV)**

**Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. (NLT)**

**I think the NLT does a great job with the text. The GNB does an excellent job in simplifying the concept and maintaining the accuracy of the message.**

**To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see. (GNB)**

**Faith is the basis, the substructure, of the whole Christian life. Faith is the basis for everything in which we have hope in this life. Faith involves confident action in response to what God has made known. Faith does look upward, away from the things of this world, toward unseen things above.**

**We sing songs like My Faith Looks Up To Thee and many other songs that remind us and encourage us to keep our eyes on our unseen reward. Our faith also looks forward in time to when Christ comes (10:38). Faith is about having confidence that the promises when have been given and things that we cannot see will actually happen.**

**What we cannot forget is that it is by faith that people are approved by God. What exactly did these people do who are praised in this eleventh chapter? They put undivided confidence in God. In spite of their trials and their difficult circumstances, they triumphed because of their trust in God. What we are seeing as we read about these heroes of faith are people who are clinging to God's promises, depending on God's word, and remaining faithful to God in all their actions.**

**That picture of faith is really seen in the example provided in verse 3:**

**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. (11:3; ESV)**

**The beginning point is quite simple, yet powerful. The universe and everything created was brought into existence by things that cannot be seen.**

**The words of God, as he commanded the universe into existence, can't be seen. Yet those unseen words brought the visible worlds. I believe this stands as what has been called today the watchmaker argument. We haven't seen the person who made our watch, made our car, or made any other object or possession. Yet although we have not seen the one who made our watch, we know someone did make it. Random chance and long periods of time do not create useful and powerful objects. So, also it is with the universe. The visible world was created by the invisible God through his invisible command.**

**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. (11:6; ESV)**

***This is a key teaching.* There are very few statements in the scriptures where we find the words that something is impossible. In fact, we have been taught that there is nothing that's impossible with God. But here is found a statement about what is impossible and we need to listen to these words very carefully. *It is impossible to please God without faith.* Without having our confidence in God, without relying on God's promises, without depending on God's word, without faithful actions toward God, we aren't going to make it. If our eyes are on the things of this world, we will definitely shrink back and we will give up.**

**We need to feel the sting of the word “impossible.” We are not going to make it if we do not have our full faith in God. Without a full and complete reliance upon God, difficult circumstances will cause us to shrink back and give up.**

**Notice that there are two things that we need to have full confidence in our lives. (1) Must believe that God exists. I submit to you that this is not just merely the mental assent that one believes in God. Let us go back to the first verse and remind ourselves what faith looks like. Faith is being certain about things we cannot see. Do you have the faith that gives you certainty that God exists? Do you believe in the God you cannot see? Do you believe that he spoke the worlds into existence? It really does matter because if we don't, then we are going to shrink back and not be found pleasing to God. (2) Must believe that God rewards those who sincerely seek him. This belief is just as important. For us to not shrink back, we really must have confidence that there is a reward coming from God if we choose to seek him. We must know this. We must believe this.**

**These things tie to the endurance we were told we needed to have in 10:36. We must know that God exists and know that he cares. For God to reward me means that he cares and knows what is going on with me. That knowledge is what will pull us through difficult times.**

***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. (ESV)***

**Verses 13-16 are important to understanding the nature of our faith. All died in faith not receiving the things promised, acknowledging that they were merely strangers and exiles on earth. Faith shows us that our attention is not here on the things of this world. Faith is understanding that we serve God not for what we will receive right now. To serve God for what we can get now is simply idolatry. We are turning God into our idol who needs to provide us health and wealth. We will only bow if God makes us happy and nothing less will be acceptable. This is not faith, but idolatry. Faith is about the unseen, not about receiving what can be seen right now. This is why I love verse 13 — these heroes of faith saw their promises from afar. How could they see the promises when faith is in the unseen and when they did not receive the promises? It is an awesome answer: these people were so certain in God's promises that they could see the unseen.**



**This world was not their home. Verse 14 tells us that they were seeking their home. They were simply traversing this life to go to the better country (v. 16). Carefully consider verse 15 — if we are thinking about this world we will go back to it. If we are worried about this life, we will shrink back and we will cling the things of this world. I think the New English Bible really brings out this picture nicely: “*If their hearts had been in the country they had left....*” If our hearts are here, then we will stay here. We will place life importance on the physical and material rather than on the better country that God has promised.**

**Now look at verse 16 because these are encouraging words also. God is not ashamed to be called their God. Can you imagine God saying that he is willing to admit that we are his people and he’s our God? What a glorious picture! Then the writer reminds us of what is waiting. God has already prepared a city for us. The statement is in the past tense. The reward is there waiting for us. The reward is certain. Desire the better city, not the temporary pleasures of this world. This idea is continued through the rest of chapter 11.**

**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. (11:39-40; ESV)**

# Heroes of Faith in Hebrews 11

1	<b>ABEL'S</b> Faith	Faithful sacrifice	(Genesis 4:1-15)
2	<b>ENOCH'S</b> Faith	Walked with God & was translated	(Genesis 5:22)
3	<b>NOAH'S</b> faith	Built the ark	(Genesis 6:14-22)
4	<b>ABRAHAM'S</b> Faith	Followed as God led	(Genesis 12:1-7)
5	<b>SARAH'S</b> Faith	Came to believe what was impossible	(Genesis 18:11-14)
6	<b>ISAAC'S</b> Faith	Foretold the future	(Genesis 27:27-29)
7	<b>JACOB'S</b> Faith	God would fulfill His promises	(Genesis 49)
8	<b>JOSEPH'S</b> Faith	His bones to rest in Canaan	(Genesis 50:25)
9	<b>MOSES'</b> Faith	Forsook Egypt for Israelites	(Hebrews 11:24-25)
10	<b>JOSHUA'S</b> Faith	Walls of Jericho fell	(Joshua 6:20)
11	<b>RAHAB'S</b> Faith	Cast her lot with the Israelites	(Joshua 2:9; 6:23)
12	<b>GIDEON'S</b> Faith	Waxed mighty in war	(Judges 7:21)
13	<b>BARAK'S</b> Faith	Subdued kingdoms	(Judges 4)
14	<b>SAMSON'S</b> Faith	From weakness was made strong	(Judges 16:28)
15	<b>JEPHTHAH'S</b> Faith	Defeated armies	(Judges 11)
16	<b>DAVID'S</b> Faith	Obtained promises	(2 Samuel 7:11-13)
17	<b>DANIEL'S</b> Faith	Stopped mouths of lions	(Daniel 6:22)
18	<b>JEREMIAH'S</b> Faith	Was tortured	(Jeremiah 20:20)
19	<b>ELIJAH'S</b> Faith	Raised the dead	(1 Kings 17:17-24)
20	<b>ELISHA'S</b> Faith	Raised the dead	(2 Kings 4:8-37)
21	<b>ZECHARIAH'S</b> Faith	Was stoned	(2 Chronicles 24:20)
22	<b>ISAIAH'S</b> Faith	Sawn asunder	(Tradition)



# by Faith Enoch

was translated that he should not see death and  
was not found because God had translated him  
For before his translation he had this testimony  
that he pleased God  
Hebrews 11:5

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BUT WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE  
TO PLEASE HIM: FOR HE THAT COMETH  
TO GOD MUST BELIEVE THAT HE IS,  
AND THAT HE IS A REWARDER OF THEM  
THAT DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM.

- HEBREWS 11:6 (KJV) -

AND GOD REMEMBERED

# NOAH

By faith, Noah built a ship in the middle of dry land. He was warned about something he couldn't see, and acted on what he was told. The result? His family was saved. His act of faith drew a sharp line between the evil of the unbelieving world and the rightness of the believing world. As a result, Noah became intimate with God.

Hebrews 11:7 MSG

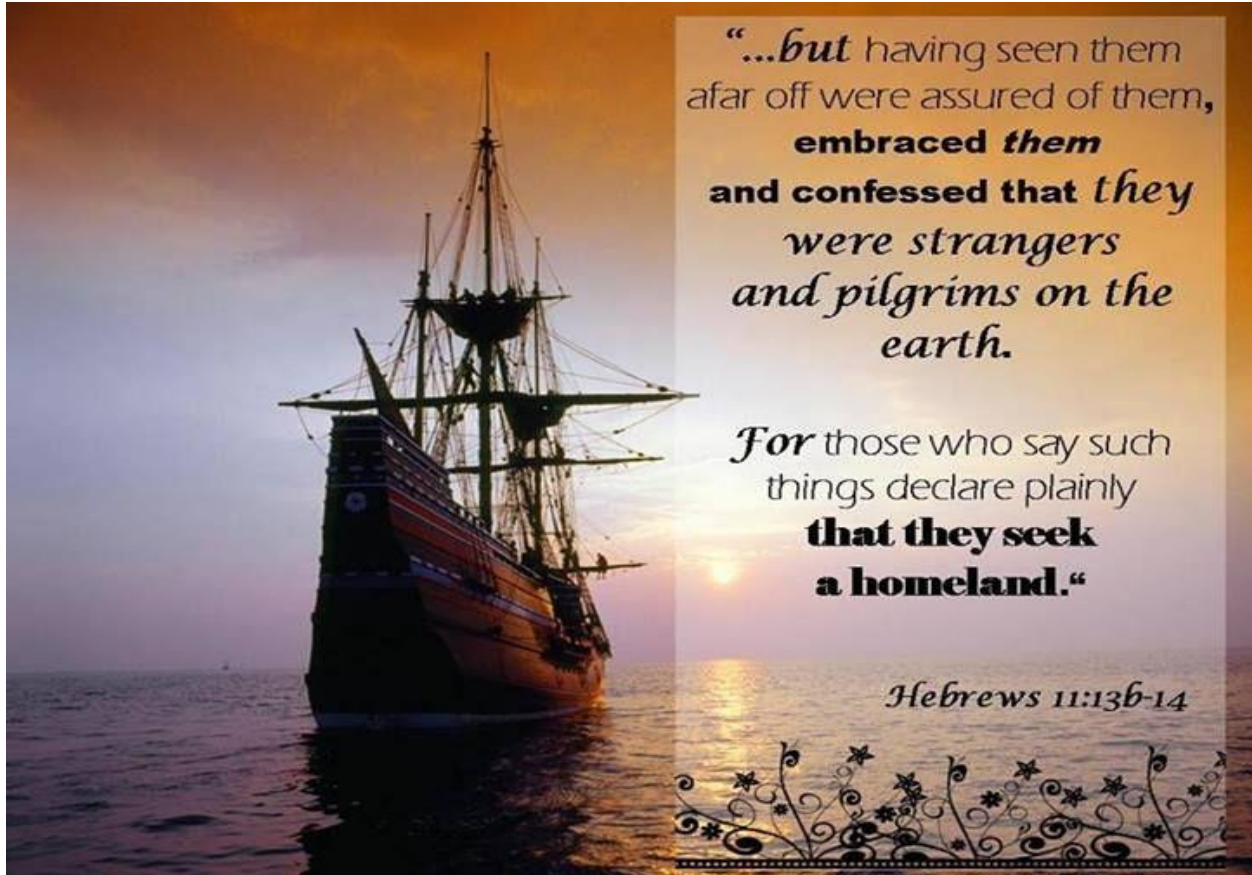
# BY FAITH!

BY FAITH ABRAHAM,  
WHEN CALLED TO  
GO TO A PLACE HE  
WOULD LATER  
RECEIVE AS HIS  
INHERITANCE,  
OBEYED AND WENT,  
EVEN THOUGH HE DID  
NOT KNOW WHERE  
HE WAS GOING.



HEBREWS 11:8 TNIV

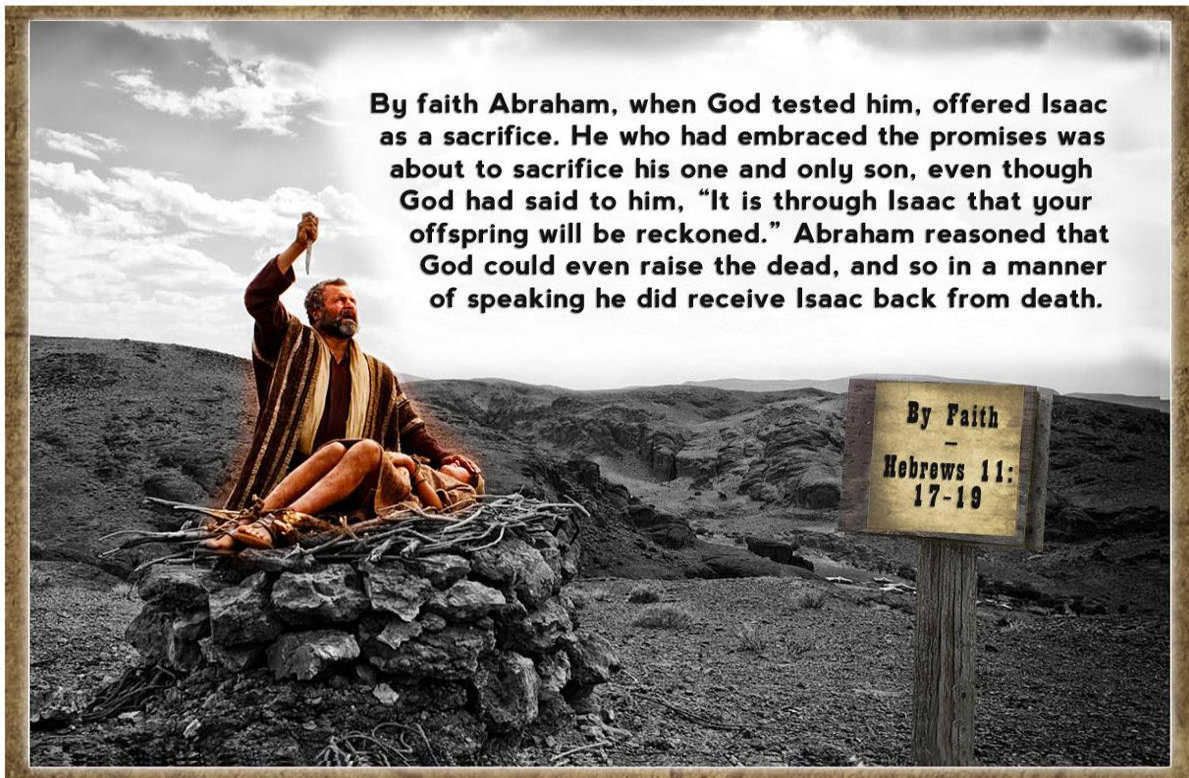
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“...*but* having seen them  
afar off were assured of them,  
**embraced *them***  
**and confessed that *they***  
***were strangers***  
***and pilgrims on the***  
***earth.***

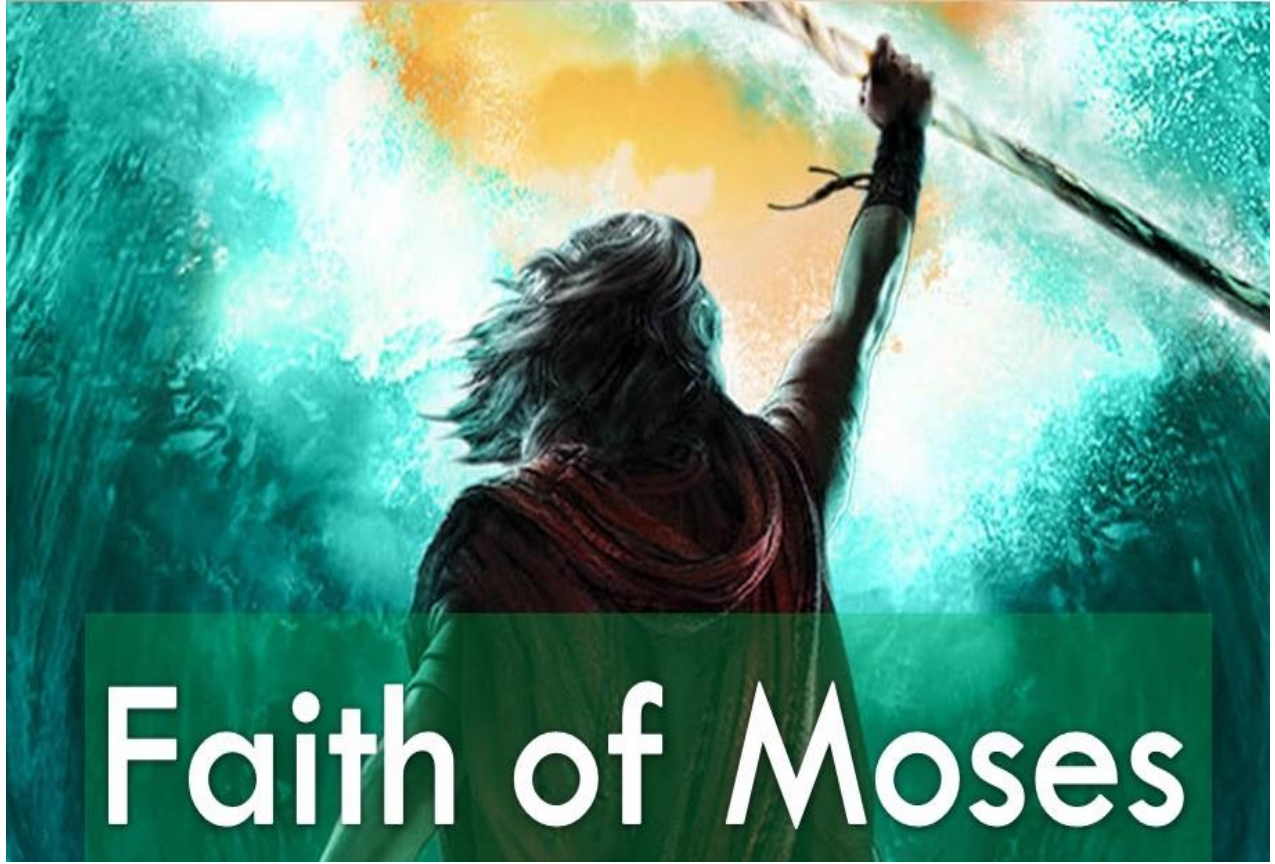
*For* those who say such  
things declare plainly  
**that they seek**  
**a homeland.“**

*Hebrews 11:13b-14*



**By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.**

**By Faith  
-  
Hebrews 11:  
17-19**



# Faith of Moses



By faith  
the people  
passed through  
the Red Sea  
as on

**DRY LAND;**

but when the  
*Egyptians tried*  
to do so,

**THEY WERE DROWNED.**

Hebrews 11:29

[bit.ly/sola\\_scriptura](http://bit.ly/sola_scriptura)



faith is being sure  
of what we hope for  
& certain of what we  
do NOT see. Heb. 11:1

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## **EXAMPLES OF FAITH**

**As an existential philosopher and a Christian, Søren Kierkegaard was somewhat negative toward nineteenth-century European culture. He once said, “Let others complain that our age is evil; my complaint is that it is paltry.” He meant that his era was a time when people lacked passionate faith. To relieve his discouragement, he went back to the pages of the Old Testament: “There at least one feels that it’s human beings talking. There people hate, people love, people murder their enemy and curse his descendants through all generations, there people sin.” He was not rejoicing in these sinful behaviors. He merely was noting the Old Testament saints exercised their faith amid real-life turmoil and struggle.**

### **Abel: Giving Honor to God**

**The hall of fame of faith begins with one of the earliest men of God: “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” (Heb. 11:4). Here we see that faith is not simply trusting God for the future or trusting the Word of God for the truth about things that are invisible to our eyes, even things that happened in the past, such as the creation. Faith is also the means by which we live in response to the commands of God.**

**We are told that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. We read in the book of Genesis how both Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices to God (4:3–7). God received the sacrifice of Abel but rejected the one from Cain. Some people argue the reason for the difference in God’s response was that Abel offered an animal sacrifice while Cain offered produce of the fields, but nothing in the Bible says only an animal offering is acceptable.**



**All kinds of occasions for grain offerings, cereal offerings, and others are set forth in the Old Testament, so it is not appropriate for us to conclude that God accepted Abel's sacrifice and rejected Cain's because of the nature of the sacrifices themselves. Instead, Abel is commended here in Hebrews 11 not because he gave an animal but because he offered his sacrifice by faith.**

**God was very concerned, as we see throughout the Old Testament, with the heart attitude of the person who brought a sacrifice to the altar. Very often in the Old Testament era, people simply went through the motions, offering their sacrifices in a perfunctory manner, for which they were hypocrites. God said, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies" (Amos 5:21). God was displeased by the faithlessness of the people as they went through their religious practices. Yet that happens in every generation. People go to church every Sunday and go through the motions of religion while their hearts are far from God. They act out their religion, as actors in a play, but without faith, without any real personal commitment to God.**

**But when Abel brought his sacrifice, he brought it with the sacrifice of praise. [He brought his best.] He wanted to honor God. He was trying to be obedient and to manifest his love for God and trust in Him. It was a genuine act of worship. But Cain brought a sacrifice in a hypocritical fashion. In fact, we see the true character of Cain immediately thereafter. He became jealous because God received the sacrifice of his brother, so he rose up in a jealous rage and killed Abel. Cain was a faithless man, as he demonstrated by his evil deed. But Abel's life was marked by faith.**

## **Enoch: Pleasing God**

**In Hebrews 11:5 we read, "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." This vignette builds on that of Abel. Enoch was translated (bypassing physical death) because he pleased God.**

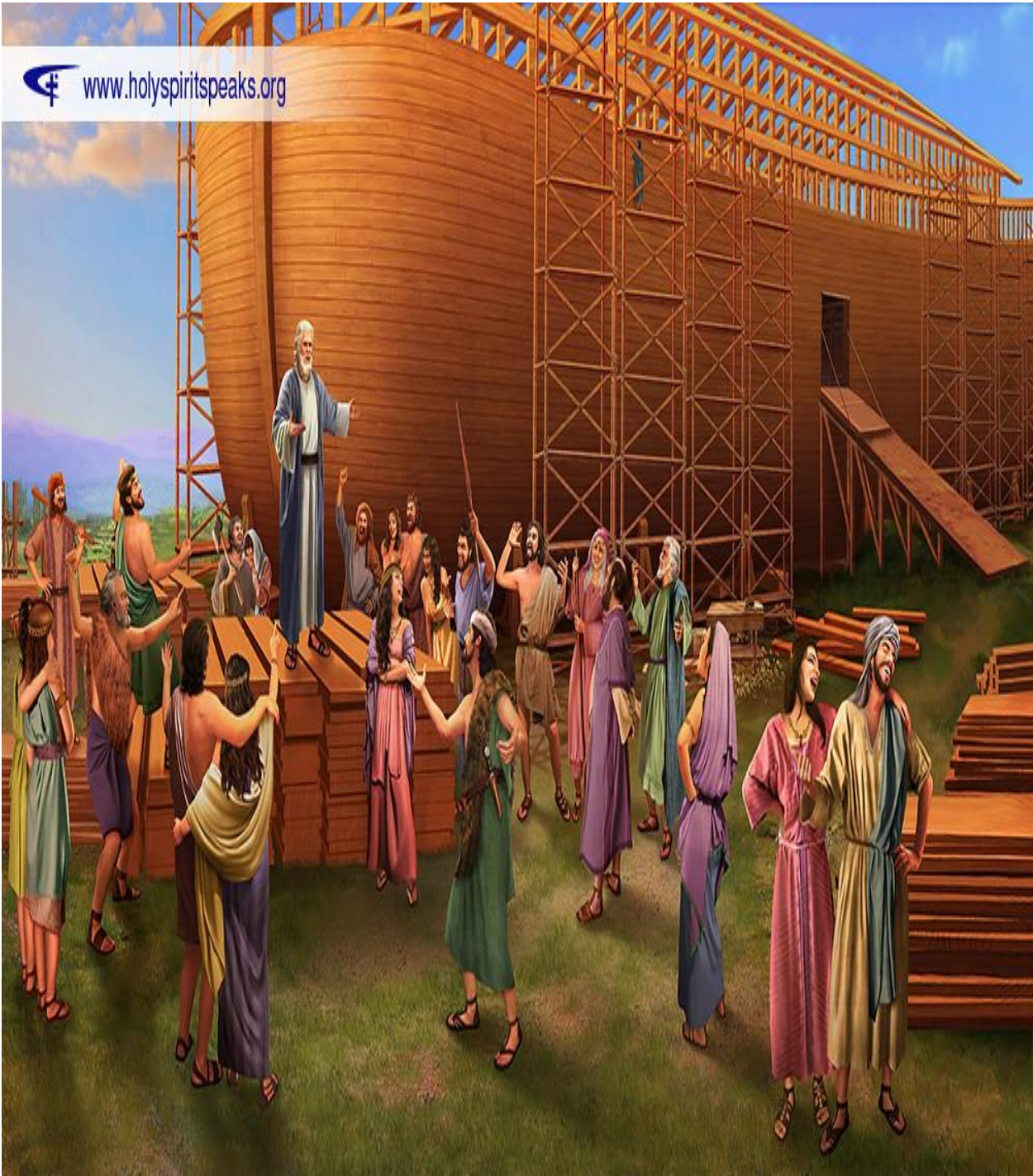
**The author of Hebrews then explains the connection to faith: “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (v. 6). We cannot come to God if we don’t believe there is a God. That’s simple, isn’t it? We cannot seek to please God if we don’t believe that God exists and rewards those who seek after Him. Enoch demonstrated his faith by seeking to please God, just as all faithful people do. So, faith is central to the motivation of the human heart to live in a way that honors God.**

**We see this in the Gospels as well. When Jesus met people who went out of their way to show honor to Him, He commended them for their faith. This was because no one bothers to honor a person he doesn’t believe exists or is worthy of honor.**

**Opinion polls continue to indicate that a very high percentage of people in the United States believe in the existence of God, but the figure essentially is meaningless. Usually, the question is stated something like this: “Do you believe in a supreme being, a higher power, or something greater than yourself?” Anybody can believe in a higher power. Cosmic dust is a higher power. But it’s not God. When the pollsters probe further by asking, “Do you want to please God and live for Him?” the number for the positive responses becomes much smaller.**

**So many of us are practical atheists. We may be theoretical theists, but our lives betray a practical kind of atheism in that we don’t live in order to please God. If we don’t live in order to please God, it can only be because we do not really believe He is worth our attention.**

**It has been said that if you objectively want to find out what a person really believes, you should analyze his checkbook. As Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:34). So, if you want to know where your heart is, check out your treasure. Do we invest in the kingdom of God or our own kingdoms? The person who lives by faith lives to please God, not men. Enoch was singled out because he had a consuming passion in his life to please God. That’s what a person of faith does.**



## **Noah: A Fool for Christ**

**The next hero of faith cited in Hebrews 11 is Noah: “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear dutifully 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” (v. 7). God warned Noah that He was going to send a massive deluge on the earth to destroy the human race because of its sin, but He commanded Noah to make a large boat to save his family and animal species (Gen. 6). “In reverent fear,” Noah set about to do exactly what God commanded.**

**We know that it took Noah many years to build the ark, and many Bible scholars have made the point that Noah must have been ridiculed by the people of his time. Many years ago, I heard a comedy routine in which Bill Cosby played the role of Noah. As he was building the ark in the middle of the desert, people would come by and ask, “Noah, what are you doing?” He would reply, “Building a boat.” “Why?” “Well, because there’s going to be a flood.” Cosby captured the ridicule that Noah likely experienced when he gave the response of the people: “Yeah, sure.”**

**Building an ark in a desert is certainly ludicrous in and of itself. But Noah believed God, and he was willing to be what the New Testament speaks of as a “fool for Christ” (1 Cor. 4:10). He put his confidence not in the judgments of this world but in the judgment of God. He built the ark, through which the human race survived, because he lived by faith.**

**The Scriptures say that Noah’s activity in this regard “condemned the world” (Heb. 11:7a). His faithfulness “showed up” the faithlessness of the other people of his day. Through this faith, he “became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (v. 7b).**

## **Abraham: Faith and Obedience**

**After discussing the faith of Abel, Enoch, and Noah, the author of Hebrews comes to Abraham. This man has been called “the father of the faithful.”**

**We read: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance” (Heb. 11:8). Notice that the word *faith* is conjoined here with the word *obeyed*. Living in submission to what God commands is the essence of faith. That is what Abraham did to a large degree, which is why he is called the father of the faithful.**

**While Abraham was still living in paganism, God appeared to him and promised that he would be the father of a great nation. We are told that “he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).**

**Abraham was counted (reckoned) righteous by God because he trusted the promise of God. Abraham demonstrated his faith through obedience over time. That is why James would point to Genesis 22, where Abraham offered up Isaac on the altar, demonstrating the fruit of his faith by acting in obedience (James 2:21).**

**So, the author of Hebrews says it was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to go to a place he did not know. Let’s think about that. We can sensationalize it and make it more pious than real, but the reality was that Abraham was an old man. He had his roots firmly planted in Mesopotamia. That’s where his family was. That’s where his possessions were. That’s where his heritage was. But then, in his old age, God came to him and said: “I want you to get out of this land. Get out of your place where you’re culturally comfortable. I am going to make you an alien in a strange and foreign land. I’ll show you where it is.”**

**So, Abraham packed up and left. If ever a venture was undertaken by faith alone, it was this immigration of Abraham to a foreign land. That’s why we are told: “By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs together with him of the same promise. For Abraham was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:9–10).**

**There’s something significant about the lifestyle of Abraham as a man of faith, as well as that of his son and grandsons. Abraham lived the life of a pilgrim. He didn’t have a permanent address. He lived in a tent.**

**Living in tents was also the experience of the people of Israel. They were semi-nomads. They moved all over the landscape as the weather patterns changed to ensure sustenance for their flocks. They had to go where the grass was growing at a particular time, so there was no permanent place they could call home. Abraham waited and looked for a city that was not an earthly city, but one whose builder was God.**

**But Abraham was looking for more than a land. Remember Jesus' words: "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31–32). The Pharisees took umbrage at that, responding, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone" (v. 33). Jesus said: "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did.... Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad" (vv. 39, 56). Jesus was saying the same thing as the author of Hebrews: Abraham not only looked forward to the promise of land, he looked forward to the promise of the Redeemer, which promise was fulfilled in the person of Christ.**

**When Paul teaches the doctrine of justification by faith in his epistle to the Romans, his "Exhibit A," the person he uses to illustrate how salvation works, is Abraham. He makes the point that people in the Old Testament were redeemed in exactly the same way as people are redeemed today. The meritorious ground of salvation in the Old Testament was the merit of Christ, not the merit of bulls and goats. As we are told elsewhere in Hebrews, the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin (Heb. 10:4, 11), but those sacrifices pointed beyond themselves (Heb. 9:13–14). They prefigured or they foreshadowed the coming Messiah, whose blood would take away sin.**

**The only difference between Abraham and us is the direction of time. Abraham looked forward to the cross; we look backward to the cross. His faith was in the promise; our faith is in the fulfillment of that promise. But the way of salvation was the same for Abraham as it is for us today.**

## Sarah: Judging God to Be Faithful

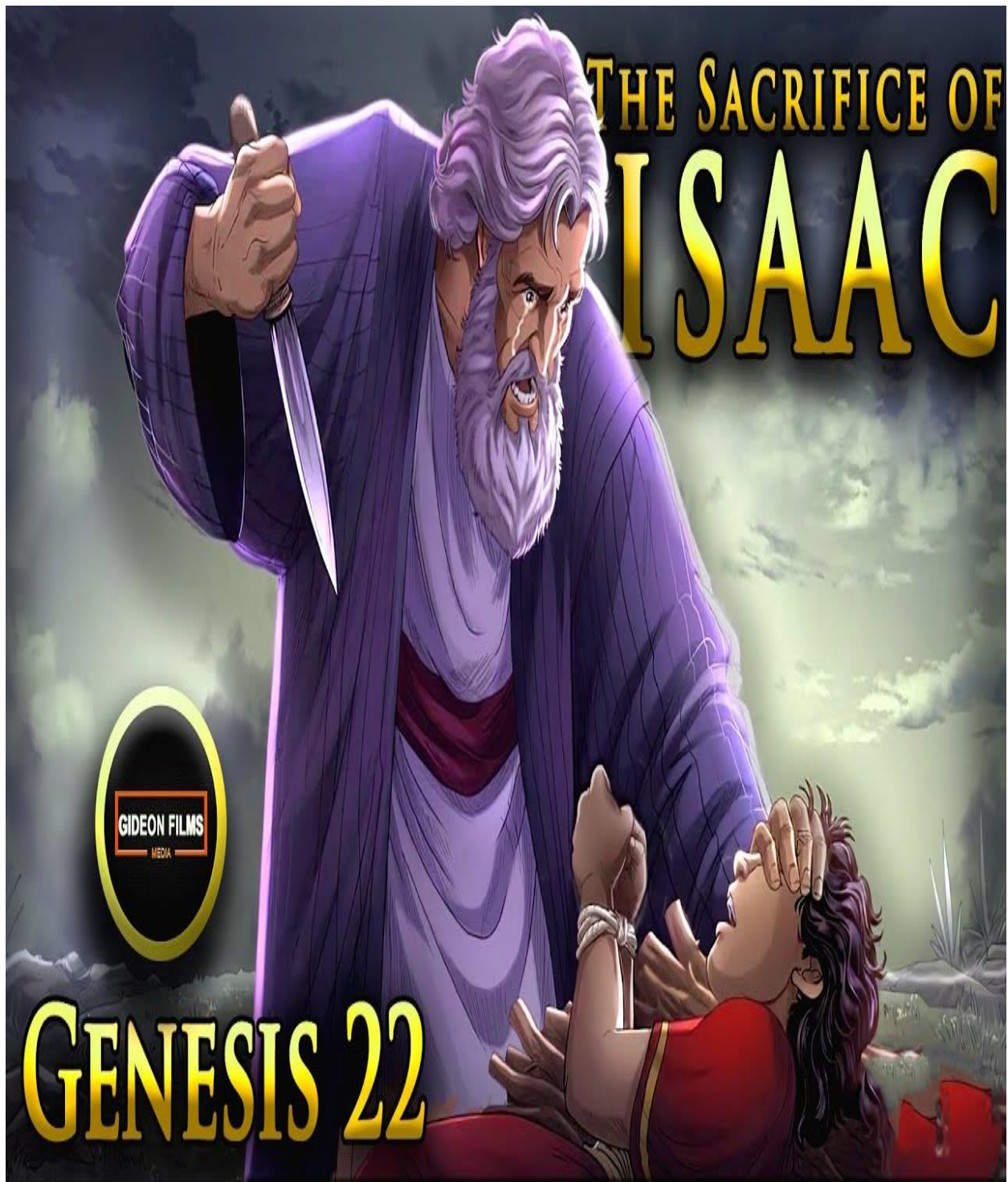
The author of Hebrews goes on to speak of Abraham's wife, Sarah: "By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore, from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore" (11:11–12).

Like her husband, Sarah judged God to be faithful. That's the dynamic of faith. As I said above, **faith is not believing that there is a God. Faith is believing God.** Faith is trusting the fidelity of God. When I am faithful, I am relying on One whom I deem to be perfectly faithful. That's what Sarah did, and that's what people do today when they put their trust in God because they see that He alone is ultimately worthy of absolute trust.

There is a kind of interlude in the roll call in Hebrews 11:13–16: "These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged 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 isn't ashamed to be called their God, for he's prepared them a city."

This passage sums up the experiences of those who already have been enumerated. They had much in common, including this: **they died in faith. They died without seeing or realizing the full measure of the promises that first made them pilgrims.** God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation.

We talk about Canaan as the "promised land," and it was promised first of all to Abraham and to his seed, yet the real estate that Abraham ever owned after he made his journey from Mesopotamia was Machpelah, the site of his grave, but he could see the future fulfillment of the promise that God made him, and he trusted in that.





## Abraham: Trusting Resurrection Power

The author of Hebrews finds yet another aspect of the faith of Abraham, causing him to revisit the great patriarch: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back” (Hebrews 11:17–19).

Apart from Christ’s obedient sacrifice, probably the greatest act of faith in fear and trembling recorded in all of Scripture is the obedient response of Abraham when God commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac. This occurred after God had given Abraham a promise of future generations through Isaac and after God had made him wait many years for the birth of Isaac. In the interim, Abraham had taken steps to make sure that this promise was fulfilled with aid of his wife Sarah, who, regarding herself as barren, offered her handmaid Hagar as a surrogate mother so that Abraham could have a son in order to fulfill the promise. Hagar had a son named Ishmael—but he was not the son of promise. Finally, after more years of waiting, God opened the womb of Sarah, and in her old age and in her barrenness, she brought forth a son who was given the name *Isaac* (when told she would have a son, Sarah had laughed, and the name *Isaac* means “laughter” in the Hebrew language). All of Abraham’s hopes, his entire destiny, was wrapped up in this child.

Then God came to him and said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen. 22:2). Abraham, in fear and trembling, set out on that three-day journey with Isaac. On the way, Isaac asked Abraham, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (v. 7). Abraham responded, “God will provide for himself the lamb” (v. 8).

I think we can read this story and make Abraham a paper saint with a glib kind of piety, as if he were saying to Isaac, “Hey, don’t worry about it, son, God’s going to provide us with a lamb when we get to the mountain.” Not at all. Abraham was shaking in his boots. He was wondering: “How could God ask me to do this? How could God call me to such a place at such a time to do such a thing?” But he trusted God, clearly assuming that after he killed Isaac, God would raise him up from the dead (Heb. 11:19).

So, Abraham went to the mountain designated by God, built the altar, spread the wood, and bound his son. But when he raised the knife, at the last possible second, God intervened and said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God” (Gen. 22:12). This is a story of faith to the absolute degree. The only thing that ever exceeds it in Scripture is the faith of Christ Himself.

## Abraham’s Descendants: A Legacy of Faith

The author of Hebrews next turns to Abraham’s descendants. He writes: “By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau” (Heb. 11:20). Though Esau was Isaac’s firstborn son, he despised his birthright and sold it to Jacob (Gen. 25:34), and Jacob by trickery and deceit received the greater blessing (Gen. 27:27–29), all in accordance with God’s sovereign plan (Gen. 25:23). Hebrews then notes, “By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff” (11:21).

Then we encounter Joseph. Just one sentence is devoted to him: “By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones” (11:22). If any character in the Old Testament lived by faith, it was Joseph, because most of the time he lived by faith **he was all alone**. He had no compatriots from the Jewish faith with him. **He was in prison in an alien country, falsely accused, unjustly sentenced, all alone**. But he trusted God in that cell until God not only caused him to be released but elevated him to the prime ministership of Egypt, the strongest nation in the world at that time.

He later invited his extended family to dwell in Egypt, but when he was dying, he knew that at some future day his clan would leave Egypt for the Promised Land. Why? Because he knew the promise, and he knew Egypt was not that land. Therefore, anticipating the Israelites' exodus from Egypt long before it ever happened, in his last will and testament Joseph left instructions to have his bones carried out of Egypt and back to the Promised Land. Now that's faith. Joseph was saying: "I may not get there while I'm alive this life, but I want my bones to be disinterred and reburied in the Promised Land. I know my people will go there one day because God has promised it."

## Moses' Parents: Faith in Providence

In verse 23, the roll call of faith begins to approach the events of the exodus: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict." Moses' parents exercised faith in the dark days of their slavery in Egypt. They exhibited tremendous faith in trusting their most prized possession to the providence of God.

Think of it: When Pharaoh decreed that every male Hebrew child was to be slain, Moses' mother *hid her infant until his lungs developed to the point where his cries could be heard*. Then she made a basket out of reeds, carefully covered it with pitch, placed her baby in this basket, set it adrift in a tributary of the Nile, and let it go. She let it float away under the care of divine Providence, and God caused the daughter of Pharaoh to find this baby, adopt it as her own, and raise him as a prince in Pharaoh's court. What an incredible outcome to a mother's faith.

## Moses: Looking to the Reward

When the author of Hebrews focuses on Moses himself, he writes: "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." (11:24–26).

**In this brief description, the author of Hebrews recounts the radically life-changing decision that Moses made. On what do we base our decisions? What is the value system by which we determine to go one way or another? Moses clearly had a decision to make, a decision that involved an antithesis. In order to choose one thing, he had to reject something else. In order to go in one direction, he had to repudiate the other direction.**

**In his upbringing, he had enjoyed the riches of the palace, educational benefits, status, and privilege. He had a life of ease and luxury laid out before him as a young man raised in Pharaoh's court. But he came to a crossroads in his life, and he chose not to bask in the treasures of Pharaoh. Instead, "He chose to be mistreated with the people of God."**

**When did he make this choice? It was when he saw one of his people being brutally beaten by a slave master and rose up to defend the man. He crossed the line and killed the Egyptian, and from that very moment he could not go back. He chose exile, banishment to the Midianite wilderness and abject poverty, rather than the continued enjoyment of "the fleeting pleasures of sin."**

**No sin has ever made any person happy. Sin cannot bring happiness, but it can deliver pleasure, and when we confuse pleasure with happiness, we are wide open to the seduction of the enemy. But the pleasures of sin are fleeting. They pass quickly, and Moses had to make a decision between the present and eternity.**

**I can imagine people approaching Moses in the Midianite wilderness, where he was eking out a subsistence living, and asking him: "You once lived in Pharaoh's court, right? What are you doing here?" He would have answered that question by saying, "I'm living by faith." As Hebrews puts it, "He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward."**

## **Our Topsy-Turvy World**

**The author of Hebrews continues, citing one example of faith after another:**

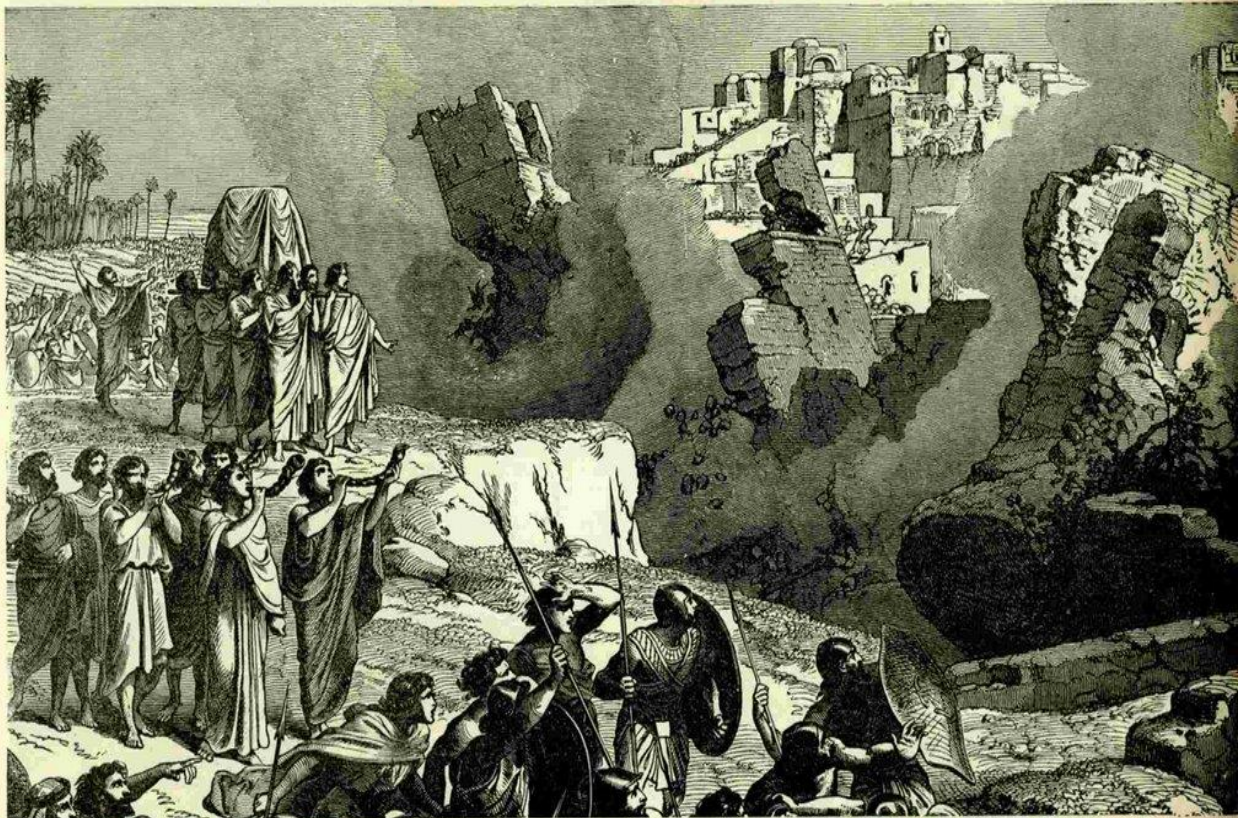
**By faith [Moses] left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel and prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Heb. 11:27–38)**

**We live in a topsy-turvy world where beggars ride on horses and princes walk in rags. The people named in Hebrews 11 were those of whom the world was not worthy—the ones who were sawn in two, stoned, afflicted, and tormented, and lived in deserts, mountains, and caves. On top of all that, they did not experience the fulfillment of God’s promise in their lives: “And all these, though commended through their faith, didn’t receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (vv. 39–40).**

**The author is saying that these saints had to wait for us. Just imagine if God had finished the consummation of His work of ten years ago. How many of us would have missed the kingdom?**

(30) By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. (31) By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. (32) And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: (33) Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (34) Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

**Hebrews 11:30-34**



FALLING OF THE WALLS OF JERICO.

## Intro

### **Joshua 6: The Fall of Jericho:**

- Children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and encountered a fortified city.
- Jericho stood opposite Mt. Nebo on the Western side of the Jordan.
- It was ruled by a king (Josh. 2:2), and its walls surrounded the city.
- The site has been excavated several times with the most complete work done by the Garstang expedition in 1930-1936, followed by Kenyon in 1952-1958.
- Evidence of fire and great stores of remains of charred grains were found. Remains of two walls, fourteen feet apart with beams running across them, which dwellings were constructed atop these, were also found.
- Archaeological findings report that the ruins appear as if a mighty blast had been set off in the midst of the city that forced the walls outward!
- One of the oldest cities; Lowest city: 853' Below Sea Level



"By Faith The Walls Of Jericho Fell Down"





# SAMSON

From a weak state  
made powerful.

Hebrews

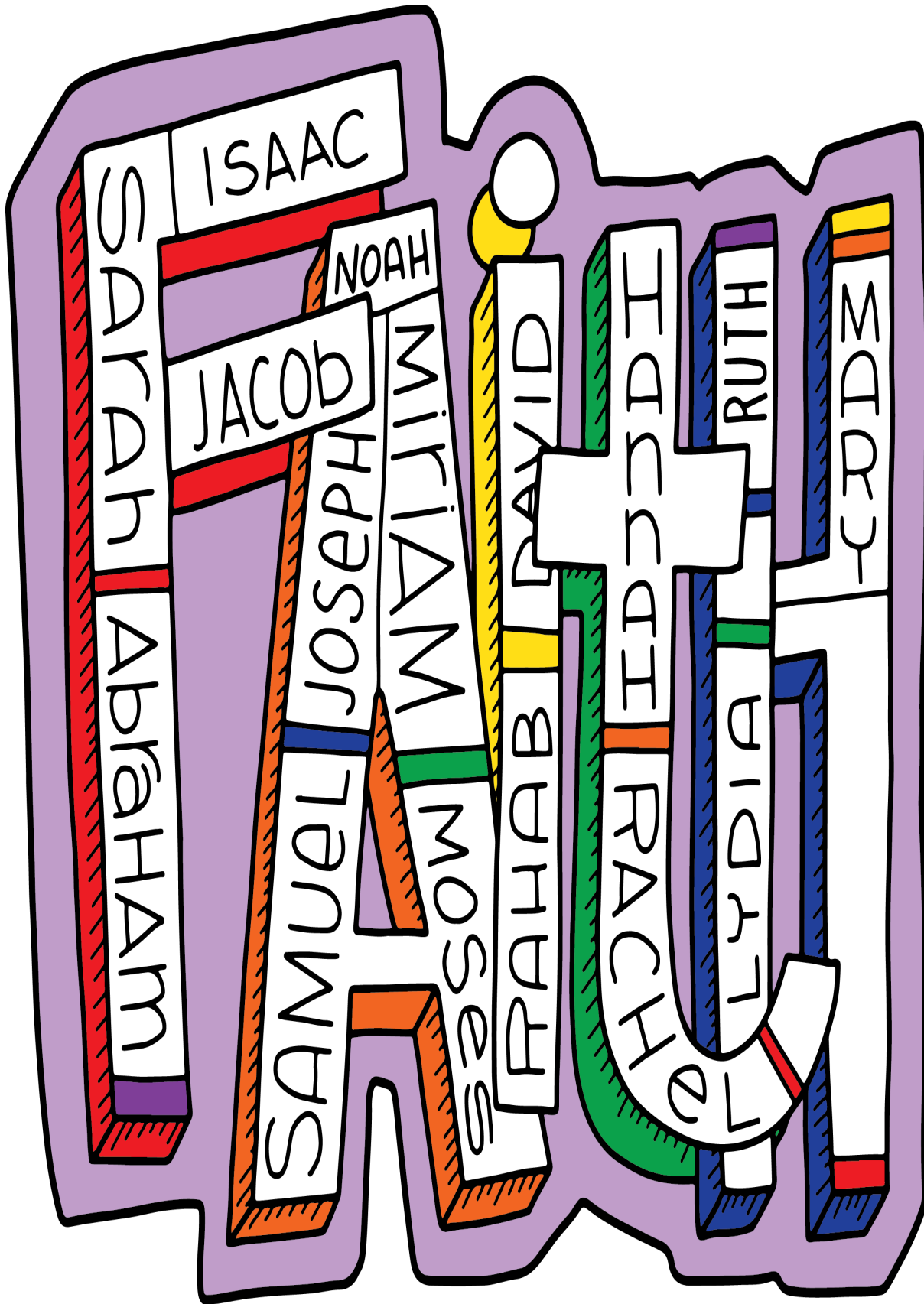
11:32-34





Hebrews 11:35-38

They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.





1

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<sup>1</sup> Sproul, R. C. (2010). [What Is Faith?](#) (Vol. 8, pp. 19–44). Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing.

## By Faith...



- **Abel offered to God... (vs.4)**
- **Enoch was pleasing.. (vs.5)**
- **Abraham obeyed by going out... (vs.8)**
- **Abraham lived as an alien (vs.9)**
- **Sarah considered Him faithful who had promised (vs.11)**
- **Abraham offered up Isaac (vss.17-19)**
- **Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau... (vs.20)**
- **Jacob blessed each of his sons (vs.21)**
- **Joseph gave orders concerning his bones (vs.22)**
- **Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (vs.24)**
- **Moses left Egypt and kept the Passover (vss.27-28)**
- **Israel passed through the Red Sea (vs.29)**
- **Israel encircled the walls of Jericho (vs.30)**
- **Rahab welcomed the spies (vs.31)**



**west palm beach**  
church of christ

# EXEMPLIFYING FAITH

HEBREWS 11



Hebrews 11 is often called the Hall of Faith because there is a listing of so many people's faith. The author of the book of Hebrews is teaching about the faith we need to endure the suffering of life and the difficulties that will come from following Jesus. The Christians addressed have suffered for the cause of Christ. These Christians endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being exposed to public insults, being mistreated, put in prison, and having their property confiscated. So, the author is working to encourage these Christians to continue forward with Jesus and to not give up. Chapter 10 ends with the encouraging words that **“we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls” (10:39)**.

Chapter 11 describes those who did not shrink back but had faith and are saved. The author is trying to overwhelm us with some very important concepts about faith. There are a number of repetitions found in this chapter which reveal the points that the author makes to these Christians and to us. We will consider three points that the author makes that will spur our faith.

### **Faith Is Necessary (11:1, 6)**

The author begins by declaring that faith is necessary. Faith is the foundation and support for your hope. Faith is what stands under our hope. We do not have hope if we do not have faith. Faith is necessary. Notice in verse 2 that it is by faith that those in the past received God's approval.

Further, faith is the conviction about things not seen. If you can see something, then faith is realized and it isn't faith. Faith is always about believing in what you can't see. Faith is about things you did not see yourself. Verse 3 illustrates this point. It is by faith we believe that what is seen (the creation) was made from things not visible. Notice verse 6 that continues to picture the necessity of faith.

**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.  
(Hebrews 11:6 ESV)**

The first point is that faith is necessary. It is impossible to please God without faith. Notice that there are two aspects of faith that we can't see. We can't see that God exists and we can't see the rewards to come for those who seek him. Faith is necessary and it is impossible to please the Lord without faith.

What makes continuing our spiritual journey with God so hard? Why are we tempted to give up? One reason we want to give up is because we cannot see any of this. We can't see God. We can't see the reward. We can't see the future. We can't see how it's going to turn out. We can't see heaven. We can't see eternity. We will say, "If I just could see it." But that is not faith. Then you would not need faith. God made this journey a journey of faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

As we read through Hebrews 11 we notice that each of the people and events spoken about was about having faith in unseen things. Noah built an ark before seeing a flood. Abraham moved from his home without seeing where he was going. Abraham and Sarah believed they would bear a child even though their bodies were too old to do so. Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead even though he had never seen bodily resurrection before. Everyone believed in the unseen. They believed in God and in what God said without any physical evidence to confirm their faith. You've never seen this but believed because God said it. This is the essence of faith. Faith is support for things we hope for.

### **Faith Does Not Seek Reward Now (11:13, 39-40)**

Second, faith does not look for joy and reward in this life. Look at what the writer says in verses 13-14.

**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 earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. (Hebrews 11:13-14 ESV)**

All of these people died in faith without receiving the things that were promised to them. The reward is not now. They were strangers and exiles on earth. They did not enjoy a privileged life. Now look at verse 15.



**If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would've had opportunity to return. (Hebrews 11:15 ESV)**

If they were thinking about this life and looking for a reward now, then they would have turned back. In fact, when we think about the failure of Israel while in the wilderness, the reason for the failure is they wanted reward immediately. Therefore, after a few days in the wilderness they made plans to return to Egypt. They were not thinking about the future reward. They were thinking about the present circumstances.

People of faith don't look at the present circumstances. People of faith do not look to have their pleasures and rewards now. Look at verses 32-38 and notice how none of these people were receiving reward in this life, even with all the great things God had accomplished through them. Turn to verse 39 and notice that the writer makes this point again.

**And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39-40 ESV)**

But I want us to hear that this is a good thing. You do not want to receive now what is promised because God is providing something better for us. Listen to verse 16.

**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. (Hebrews 11:16 ESV)**

God's people desire something better than what this life has to offer. We do not want this life and this world. We want a better life and a better world. The better thing and God's promises are not about this life but the life to come. Faith does not look for an earthly reward because everything earthly is temporary and deteriorating. We want a lasting reward. We want an eternal reward. This leads directly into the third point made in this chapter.

### **Faith Looks Upward (11:10, 26)**

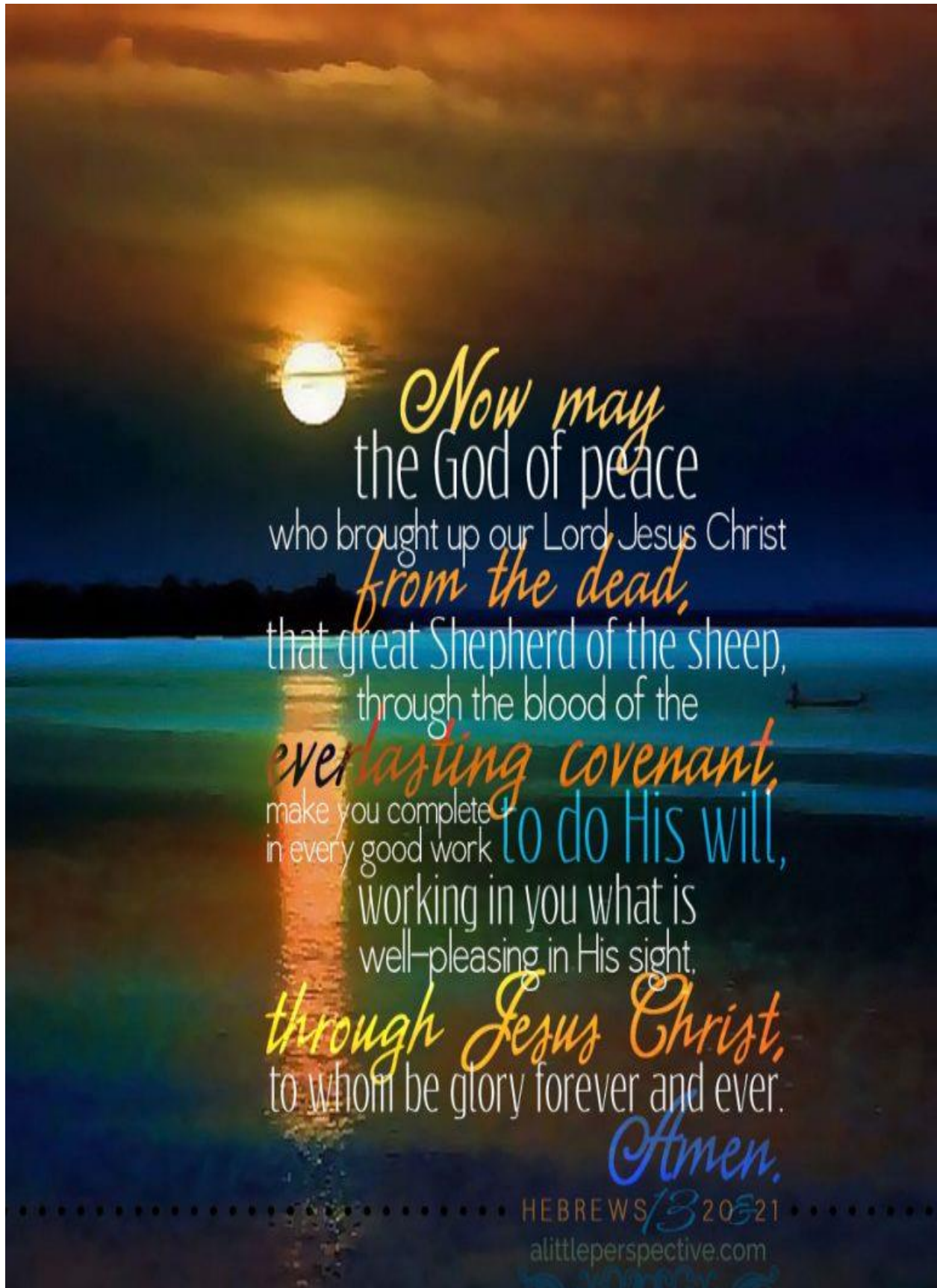
Finally, faith looks higher. As we read through Hebrews 11 we must consider why these people did this. Why did they endure all that they endured? Why did they even endure although they could not see the outcome? They endured because their faith looked upward. The people of faith desired better things and so their faith looked higher. Look at verses 9-10. Abraham went to a foreign land and lived in tents because **“he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (11:10)**. He was not looking at the present circumstances. He did not remain in Ur because leaving his home and family did not make sense. He left home and family because he was looking forward to the city God was building. Abraham did not want the reward now. Abraham was looking at what was to come.

Look at verses 24-27. Moses chose to be mistreated along with God's people. Why would Moses do this? Notice that the text says that Moses was looking at something else. He did not desire to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin (11:25). His faith caused him to look higher.

**This is the mentality we must adopt. We want better and therefore we look higher than this life. We avoid sin because we look up toward the joys and pleasures of God. Good things come from waiting.**

The end of Hebrews 10 declared that the righteous live by faith. Living by faith means understanding that we are not going to see the outcome of our faith now. We are not going to see the reward of our faith now. We are not going to look to sin to satisfy our yearnings. But let us settle in on this big point: we are not the only ones who have to do this. This is what the life of faith looks like. This is the way all the people of faith in the past lived. All lived a life of faith because they were looking to what was prepared for them by God. This statement brings us back to the first verse. Faith is the support and foundation for the things hoped for.

**What do we hope for? If we hope for this world and things in this life, then we will not have faith in God because God does not support such hope. If we long, desire, and hope for what God has promised, a better, heavenly country, then we will have a faith to support that longing. Let us hope in God**



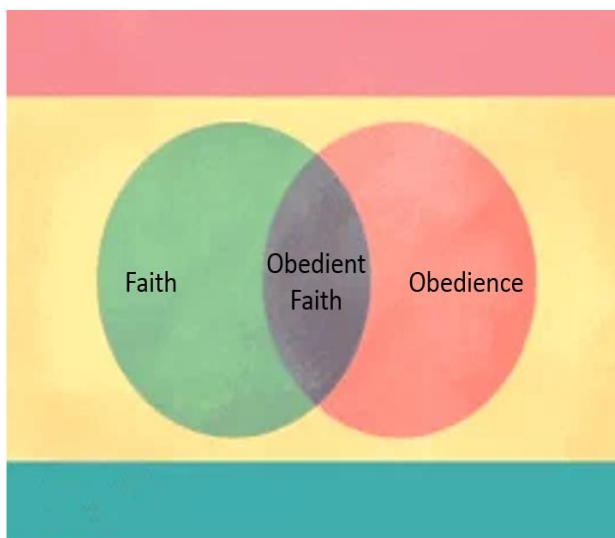
*Now may*  
the God of peace  
who brought up our Lord Jesus Christ  
*from the dead,*  
that great Shepherd of the sheep,  
through the blood of the  
*everlasting covenant,*  
make you complete  
in every good work *to do His will,*  
working in you what is  
well-pleasing in His sight.  
*through Jesus Christ,*  
to whom be glory forever and ever.  
*Amen.*

HEBREWS 13:20-21  
alittleperspective.com

# AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

## Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



*O That Will Be Glory*

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

*I an* Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

*When by His grace I shall look on His face, e*

*That will be glory, be glory for me. me.*

