

January 7, 2024

“Faith and Righteousness”  
Lesson 1

Hebrews 11 (15 various verses)

**Intro**

Today’s lesson starts Unit 2 of our winter study. This quarter’s theme is “Faith That Pleases God”. Unit 1 studied five different examples of people of faith from both the Old and the New Testaments. Unit 2 is called “Learning About Faith”, looking at the various qualities that determine and develop faith. Today the study comes from Hebrews. The book of Hebrews is filled with contrasts: Jesus with Old Testament persons, Jesus with the Levitical priesthood, Jesus with the angels, and so on. The book’s purpose was to encourage wavering Jewish Christians not to go back to Judaism, but to stand firm in their faith in Christ. Those being written to were in danger of giving up their faith due to the persecutions they were enduring because of their Christian stance. The writer (whose identity is unknown for certain) develops multiple OT persons and reasons for them to continue in their faith.

**Read Hebrews 11:1-4**

1. vs. 1: The word “faith” or variations of it occurs 37 times in Hebrews
  - Clearly, this is a key idea being developed
  - In vs. 1 the author gives one definition of faith
    - He emphasizes faith as the appropriate response to God’s promised eternal rewards
    - He describes faith as confidence or assurance
      - These words indicate certainty that something will happen
  - A Christian’s ultimate hope is not in anything that can currently be seen
    - Our hope is in the ultimate unseen eternal reality yet to come
  
2. vs. 2: Here he refers to “the elders” or “the ancients”
  - These are the OT faithful whom God commended for their faith in Him
  - The writer is going to discuss the faith that earlier Jews had in God
  - He hopes to remind them that they too (the readers) can have this same faith
  
3. vs. 3: Faith is necessary to understand things that are real but that cannot be observed firsthand
  - This is true of God’s creating of the universe
  - We believe this, not on “blind faith”, but on the evidence present
    - God’s holy character and demonstrated power are key pieces of evidence
    - Since we trust in these, we can also trust (have faith) in his account of creation
    - We weren’t there to see it, but we can believe in His account
  - This is faith based on evidence presented by God, but is not “blind faith”
  - Evidence isn’t absolute 100% proof, but facts and information indicating truth
  - Court cases are based on evidence which leads to a conclusion, a faith in the evidence
  - This is what our faith in God’s creation is as well
  
4. vs. 4: Abel is the first faithful one noted, bringing God a “better offering” than Cain
  - He brought the best of his flocks, while Cain brought “some of the fruits of the soil”
  - Abel brought the best to God, not keeping it for himself
  - Cain murdered his brother out of jealousy, becoming a negative example of lack of faith

## Read Hebrews 11:7-8, 17-18, 20-23, 32

5. vs. 7: Noah based his action of building the ark on “things not seen” (see vs. 1)  
He chose to act based on faith in what God had told him  
Even though no rain was in sight when he started, he built the ark anyway
6. vs. 8: Abraham acted on “things not seen” as well  
He left as God called him to, even though he didn’t know where God was taking him  
Gen. 15:6 says of Abraham that he “believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness”
7. vs. 17-18: A second instance of Abraham’s faith is recounted here  
God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac  
God also had told him that Isaac would be the one that would carry on his lineage  
Abraham acts in faith, leaving the next morning in obedience, with no delay  
Vs. 19 notes that Abraham believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead  
This had not likely happened before; there are no resurrection recorded in Gen.1-21  
But Abraham acts on something not seen yet, in faith
8. vs. 20: Isaac, the almost-sacrificed son, becomes father to Jacob and Esau  
He blesses them “in regard to their future”  
As Isaac himself was used by God, so his twin sons would also be used by God
9. vs. 21: Jacob is used by God as he became the father of the 12 tribes of Israel  
He blessed Joseph’s sons (Ephraim and Manassah)  
They become 2 of the 12 tribes  
Jacob’s faith is acknowledged as he worships God even as an old man
10. vs. 22: Joseph is next in the line of people of faith in Hebrews 11  
He is great-grandson to Abraham, to whom God promised the land of Canaan  
When Joseph was about to die, he give instructions that his bones be taken to Canaan  
It would be 430 years after his death before his bones got to the Promised Land  
He believed that God would fulfill His promises, which includes the exodus of His people
11. vs. 23: Moses, like Abraham, lived a life that was a journey of faith  
His parents modeled faith, that God would protect their son  
They saw that he was “no ordinary child”, and that God could/would use Him  
So they obeyed the king’s edict and put Moses in the Nile river, though in a basket!  
They believed, though they had nothing but faith to “things not (yet) seen”
12. vs. 32: This verse mentions names, but not the acts of faith which they did  
Their mention is intended to remind the readers that faithful people didn’t stop at Moses  
The first four listed are all Judges, whose stories can be found in that book  
David is considered Israel’s greatest king, and a man of great faith  
He is referred to two times in Scripture as “a man after God’s own heart”

Samuel was the last of the judges and the first of the prophets  
Much of his life can be found in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel

### **Read Hebrews 11:39-40**

- 13.vs. 39: The phrase here about being commended means they received a good testimony from God  
They were witnessed doing something through faith  
This is the same idea, the same word, used in Heb. 11:2  
All of them were commended for their faith in God's plan and work  
Everything done looked forward to Jesus and His coming salvation  
"None of them received what had been promised"  
They died without getting what God had promised—was God unfaithful to them?  
As Paul says, "May it never be!"  
Rather, they are commended for believing in what they "could not see"  
As people of faith, they knew that God's promises would come to them eventually
- 14.vs. 40: "Something better" was planned by God than merely delivering something to them then  
Christ's earthly mission is the "something better"  
Both we and these mentioned are made perfect in Him  
They could not receive the fullness of God's promises until Christ fulfilled His mission

Application: Hebrews 11 selects some very faithful peoples as examples, yet people who also had some significant imperfections: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel. All of these men were not perfect. Indeed, their flaws are noted in Scripture to remind us of that. God uses imperfect people to accomplish His will. He must, as there are no perfect people in the world. Yet these people walked by faith and not by sight, as Paul commanded the Corinthians to do (2 Cor. 5:17). They lived with only a promise and a hope, while we today live with the cross and the resurrection as accomplished facts. We have the same promises of eternal life with God as they did. Many times we must make decisions without being able to see their results. A faith-based decision is based on believing the promises of God and deciding to do what God has called one to do, regardless of how it looks to you or to others.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for these faithful people whose lives have been recorded for us in Your Word. May their actions inspire us to also live lives of faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.