

The Faith of Abel, Enoch, and Noah

Hebrews 11:1-7

Hebrews 11:1-7 - *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.* 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.*

Background Notes

Hebrews 11 is the well-known chapter on **faith** in the Bible. The great heroes of faith of the Old Testament were listed as examples for us to follow. These heroes from the "Hall of Fame of Faith" showed us what it means to **live by faith**.

At the end of chapter 10 the author of Hebrews exhorted his readers to prove the reality of their faith by living by faith. Some of the readers only professed to be believers - they had not truly trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior. And some of them were considering returning to Judaism. As far as the author of Hebrews was concerned, turning back to Judaism would prove that these "threshold believers" were never truly saved, but only professed to be believers. Why? Because **true faith is evidenced by endurance and perseverance**. *"The just shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38).*

In Hebrews 11 the author gave examples from the Old Testament of what it means to live by faith. However, before those heroes of faith were listed, a definition of faith was given in verses 1-3. It's actually more a description of faith than a definition.

What are the characteristics of faith? *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (v1). The idea here is not that if you have enough faith, you can create reality, or make something real that is not actually real. No - that's impossible! The idea in verse 1 is that faith sees that which is real, but is not visible to the natural eye - including the promises of God. Faith believes what God has revealed about the past, the present, and the future - and faith acts on and lives by that truth. That is living by faith.

An example is given in verse 3: God has revealed that He created the world by His Word. The universe is not eternal, and the universe did not create itself. God created it! But no one was there to observe it, so God revealed it to us in His Word. **Faith believes it because God said it.** It's a reasonable faith - but it is faith!

This is the kind of faith that the Old Testament saints had. **They believed, and acted on, and lived on the basis of what God had revealed. This is the kind of faith that pleases God!** And **that** is the kind of faith that should characterize all believers!

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers should follow the faith of Abel.

Verse 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.”* The first three heroes of faith all lived before the Flood - Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Missing from this list were Adam and Eve – not because they were unbelievers, but they were not role models for living by faith, for obvious reasons.

Abel's faith is described in Genesis 4:3-5, *“And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.”*

Did you ever feel sorry for Cain? Poor Cain. He brought an offering of fruits and vegetables that he had worked hard to produce - but God did not accept the best Cain had to offer. Cain brought the best of **his own works** - and that was the problem. Coming to God on the basis of our own good works is never the way to approach God. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *“For by grace are we saved through faith and that not of ourselves. It's the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast”* (emphasis added).

Abel came humbly before God by the way of an acceptable sacrifice. God accepted Abel's offering because it was offered by faith - not because Abel was a shepherd. Apparently God had revealed to Adam and Eve that blood sacrifice was the acceptable way of approaching a holy God – perhaps when the blood of animals was shed to provide the skins to cover their nakedness. (By the way, that's a great picture of salvation.)

Cain and Abel both knew the acceptable way of sacrifice, because God had revealed it. Cain did not come the way of faith. He chose to come his own way. He brought his good works. His religion was without faith, like the approach many people choose today.

Abel came to God by faith. He believed what God had revealed, and he acted on it. Have you come to God by the way of faith, like Abel? God has revealed that there is only one acceptable way of approach to Him - it's through trusting in Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Have you believed what God has revealed? Have you approached God by the way of Cain, or the way of Abel? Believers come to God by faith, like Abel.

2. Believers should follow the faith of Enoch.

Verse 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.”*

Genesis 5:21-24 talks about Enoch. *“Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”* Enoch never died. God took (“raptured”) Enoch Home before the judgment of the great Flood. In this way, Enoch was a “type” (or spiritual picture) of the Church. The Church will be caught up (“raptured”) out of this world before the Tribulation, the time of God’s judgment here on this earth. In the meantime, like Enoch, the Church is to walk by faith.

Notice that Enoch had the reputation that **he pleased God** (Hebrews 11:5). With whom did Enoch have the reputation that “he pleased God”? He had this reputation with his friends, and family, and his neighbors. Do we have this kind of testimony? Do people notice that you walk with God by the way you live your life now? When you die, will your family, your friends, and your neighbors say that you “walked with God”? Or will they just say that you’re now with the Lord? If you live your life by faith based on what God has revealed, people will say that you walked with God and pleased God.

Last week I taught a course in Biblical Hermeneutics at a Bible college in Oregon. One afternoon I played tennis with one of the students. On the tennis court, this student pointed out that the bench on the sidelines was dedicated to the memory of a man who had just died a few months ago. Apparently this man was a really nice guy; he loved the game of tennis and used to play on those courts all the time. So the town dedicated the bench in his honor and his memory.

Is that the kind of testimony you want when you die - a bench in a park? How much better it would be to have the testimony that you pleased God, and that you walked with God! Believers should follow the faith of Enoch.

3. Believers should follow the faith of Noah.

Verse 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.”*

In obedience to God, Noah prepared an ark to save his household. Can you imagine the ridicule Noah must have faced as he was building a huge boat, miles from any sizable body of water, and before there had ever been rain on this earth? I don’t know if Noah shouted back, “How long can you tread water?” But I do know that Noah preached the truth of the coming judgment of God by a great Flood - in spite of the ridicule.

In 2 Peter 2:5, Noah is called *“a preacher of righteousness.”* Genesis 6 indicates that he may have preached for a 120 years before the Flood, while the ark was being built! And he was ridiculed and mocked all during that time – without even one convert! It takes a lot of faith to preach in the face of many years of opposition and stubborn unbelief.

Hebrews 11 indicates that Noah was concerned about his family. *“He prepared an ark in the saving of his household”* (v7). Are you concerned about your family? Are you doing something about it? If you have biblical faith, you’ll be concerned for the spiritual well-being of your family. If you have faith like the faith of Noah, you’ll take action to preserve the spiritual health of your family – even though you face opposition.

God had revealed to Noah what He was going to do to judge the sin of mankind. God told Noah to build a huge boat - no small project! Noah believed God and what God had revealed about the future judgment, and he obeyed God. He preached the Word of God on one hand, and at the same time he built the ark with a hammer in the other hand. ***Trust and obey*** - that’s biblical faith!

In view of what God had revealed about the future, Noah was concerned about his family and concerned about the lost people all around him. He believed God and he obeyed God. By faith, he reached out to the lost, and he built the ark for the preservation of his family. Believers should follow the faith of Noah.

Practical Application

Do we really want to please God?

“For without faith, it is impossible to please Him” (v6).

How many of us ***really*** want to please God? What’s the key? The key is biblical faith - faith that not only believes that the one true God of the Bible exists, but that He will reward those who diligently seek Him.

How do we diligently seek the Lord, and thus please the Lord? We simply believe what He has revealed in His Word and trust in what He has promised and commanded. Then we live our lives in obedience to God’s commands and in light of what He has promised. It really does make a difference! We will be rewarded if we seek Him!

Here’s an example: How much time do we spend each day reading the Word or praising and communicating with the Lord in prayer and song - compared to how much time we spend watching TV? Just by this one comparison alone, can we truthfully say we’re living to please God? Who are we kidding?

Do we really want to please God?