

Better

A Study of Hebrews • Lesson 9

Hebrews 11 - “Consider the Faithful”

This is not an exhaustive list of the faithful but it is an intentional and organized list. It is a flyover of Genesis and Exodus because the author assumes his audience is very familiar with these stories.

Hebrews 11:1-3 - the definition of faith

Assurance is evidence of ownership, the title deed of what we hope for

Hope looks to a future reality that is coming; it fixes itself on what is invisible

= *We have the title deed to what is coming*

The people of the Old Testament received commendation by faith. The only difference between then and now is that they had the shadow and we have the substance. In the Old Testament, they had partial knowledge looking forward and we have full knowledge looking back. But all are saved by grace through faith, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

BB Warfield said that the Old Testament is like a dimly lit furnished room and the New Testament is like a flashlight shining into what is already in that room, illuminating it, giving full understanding. Does not add to what is there.

What is seen is telling us there is a God. We have enough revelation to believe in the unseen. God is not lying in who He says He is. Genesis 1:1

Hebrews 11:4

Now in Genesis 4, we hear about Cain and Able. Why did God accept Able's sacrifice but not Cain's? Because Able's sacrifice was offered in faith while Cain's was offered in unbelief. Cain was the original legalist, giving mental assent to the law which had not reached his heart.

Hebrews 11:5

Enoch lived 400 years before Noah, who was his great grandson. The earth was very wicked but he was unusual for his time - he walked in righteousness, so much so that God spared him a physical death and instead walked him directly into the presence of God. He pleased God during his life.

Thus:

Hebrews 11:6 - We can infer that with faith it IS possible to please God

Yes, all our righteousness is like filthy rags, if it is like Cain's offering. But if we have faith in God, our response to the love of God is one of joyful obedience and the desire to bring pleasure to God.

- Lack of trust in God yields legalism
- Belief/faith yields joyful desire to please God out of gratitude

In Faith we:

- Believe He exists
- And that He rewards those who seek Him**

**“Clean living (aka joyful obedience) is its own reward” in other words, you won't reap the consequences of poor decisions/sin on yourself. Not that you won't have trials for other reasons.

Hebrews 11:7

Noah built an ark in the middle of the desert. He lived near no body of water and probably had never even seen rain. People thought he was crazy. But faith... Noah didn't condemn the world but his actions condemned the world. He was a righteous man in a crooked generation.

Hebrews 11:8-10

Abraham believed God was who He said He was and desired to please Him. He trusted in the vague instructions God gave him to leave and go where He would show him.

Ur was a well developed city with conveniences like hot and cold running water. Abraham took his entire household and life on the road for a lifelong camping trip, never to return home to Ur. His home was a future hope - safe with the Lord.

Hebrews 11:11

Sarah was actually not believing God for the promises through most of her story. She did think it was too hard for the Lord to give her a child. God waited until it was physically impossible for Sarah to conceive and bear a child so that He could do the miraculous when there would be no mistaking who accomplished this.

Hebrews 11:12

Sarah was 90, Abraham was 100 and they had been waiting for 25 years for the promise of a son to be fulfilled. Abraham noted to be “as good as dead.” Is anything too hard for the Lord? He brings life from what is dead.

Hebrews 11:12-16

The patriarchs did not live to see the fulfillment of the promises before they died. They were looking ahead - died in faith.

Abraham was promised:

- Land (not given until 500 years after Abraham's death)
- Descendants more numerous than the stars (only one child through Sarah)
- All the nations would be blessed through him (only fulfilled through Jesus)

Abraham believed the unseen. His faith was in what He believed God would do. He was willing to do hard things because he was looking toward good things to come. He let go of comfort, popularity, income, his home, the familiar - to trust God because He knew God.

Will you look like Abraham and believe or like Israel and live in unbelief?

Hebrews 11:17-18

By faith Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac, the child of the promise

Hebrews 11:19

He was willing to do this because Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead and the child would live. He believed he was bringing Isaac back alive. He trusted God's resurrection power.

Hebrews 11:20-22 - The author blows through some major stories in Genesis, assuming the original audience knows these well. Noting the faith of these characters.

ie: Joseph went to Egypt never to return home again but told them to take his bones back, knowing they would return. He also saw the invisible.

Hebrews 11:23 - Now into the book of Exodus

Moses' parents saw the favor of God on him. But consider how brave they were to even marry at a time in their history when they knew if they had a male child he would be killed. There was no birth control. Any union could result in a child. But they feared God more than Pharaoh and they believed God was for them.

Hebrews 11:24-26 - Now in Exodus 4

Moses had access to comfort and ease and yet he still identified at great cost with those who were serving the Lord.

Hebrews 11:27

Moses left Egypt by faith for the second time at the Exodus (first time was in fear after killing the Egyptian). Pharaoh was angry to be losing his comfort/work help.

Hebrews 11:28 - Exodus 12

Hebrews 11:29-30 - Joshua 6 - God had already given Jericho into his hand, prior to God's instructions to march around the city- by faith, Joshua followed this through.

Hebrews 11:31 - Rahab feared God more than the King of Jericho. She was a portrait of righteousness. It is likely she was a prostitute because of the culture, not that she chose this life. Women were often sold into this to pay off a debt. She is never spoken of in Scripture in a shameful way. What about David's sin? Or Abraham's stunt of sending Sarah into the harem? So many other examples...

Hebrews 11:32

This is a patchwork list of people who were counted as having great faith yet if we look closely we see how deeply flawed they all were. It is so reassuring to us as flawed people to see how the righteous covering of Christ is so pleasing to God, which inspires us to more faith.

More faith = more desire to please God

Hebrews 11:32-38

These who were sinful and flawed were used so mightily of God and suffered tremendously for His Name. One of the greatest false teachings out in the world today is that if you faithful, God will grant you ease. Notice this Hall of Faith - their lives were HARD.

Hebrews 11:39-40 - These did not receive the promises before they died. Apart from us, they were not made perfect/complete. In other words, they had no plot resolution and didn't know how things would turn out, but they had faith, holding to the shadow - how much more faith should we have with the substance?

Being faithful = a long obedience in the same direction. It does not mean being flawless. None of us are without sin. We look to Christ.

We don't know when He is coming – not the day, time, etc. but we have faith in the unseen because what we do see is shouting to us: we know that He will come because we know that God is who He said He is.

When we live by faith, our lives become a visible evidence in the presence of an invisible truth that is in the future. If we live lives of faith we will look alien and strange to those around us. When you live like you believe God is who he says he is it changes everything – how you spend your money, your time, who are your friends, etc. and you have far less concern about your comfort in this life. Faith in what is not seen.

By Faith - Getty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXB8ihepUpE>