

Walking in Faith

Hebrews 11:1-6

INTRODUCTION: I love the Book of Hebrews. I love to read it over and over. I love to study it, and find I can never dig deep enough to exhaust its riches. I delight to preach its piercing and practical truths. But out of all thirteen chapters of this wonderful book, chapter 11 must be the pinnacle.

Hebrews 11 has long been called “The Hall of Faith,” in the Scriptures, and in it we can walk down the corridors of time and see the lives of men and women who had a real day to day relationship with God. And if we will take the time to see what their lives were like and why the Lord holds them up before us as examples of lives well lived, lives that counted for eternity, we can learn a lot that will help us here and now. There is of course one common thread that is woven through the entire tapestry that depicts the lives of these people. That thread is faith. Hence the title “Hall of Faith.” So the chapter begins with a simple but very profound lesson on faith.

Hebrews 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.

I am tempted to camp out at this point, but I will not. I will however point out that in the pinnacle chapter of the Bible about faith, we read that **faith begins in knowing that the universe was created at the command of God, the things we see made from things that cannot be seen.**

A faith that does not believe the biblical testimony of creation is a faith

- that is injured at its inception
- and will never run with the champions of faith
- but will at best limp through life struggling for the finish line.

I say this not to criticize. I was there. I say this to help by challenging you.

One of the blessings of the day in which we live is the privilege of reading the testimonies and scientifically based explanations of a multitude of scientists who do not believe the common lie of Darwinism and who are capable of pointing out the evidence that exists for direct, divine creation of the universe as the Bible describes.

Sharing even a portion of that evidence is beyond the scope of my message from Hebrews today, but if you struggle with believing the biblical testimony of creation I

invite you go to answersingenesis.org where you will find many resources to assist you in the examination of this critical part of our world view.

But now we will move on to the primary point of this chapter about faith.

Biblical faith means believing God. Not just believing, but believing God. Everybody believes someone or something. Everybody believes. But biblical faith happens when we believe God.

Now while I am sure I was taught this simple but important truth in my early years as a Christian, it did not sink in. I like many still in our world today thought that faith was a matter of the intensity of my belief.

- If I really believe I will get the job I want, I will.
- If I am confident I will get well, so much that I do not even speak of the possibility of not being healed. It will happen.

And so as a young believer, I defined faith as just believing what I wanted with great intensity.

Now do not misunderstand.

- Faith brings intensity of belief.
- Faith gives confidence.
- But the confidence is not in what I want.
- The confidence is in what God says.

Genuine faith as defined and illustrated in the Scripture is believing God.

Let us read some general instruction on biblical faith and look at the first two examples of people of faith.

Hebrews 11:1-6 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.

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.

To each of these let us ask a question:

What did you do that caused God to list you in this Hall of Faith?

I. ABEL

Question: Abel, what did you do?

Answer: **I obeyed. I obeyed God.**

A. Abel's story is told in **Gen. 4:1-7** 1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." 2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it."

B. Often people will jump to Cain's defense, saying, "**Well maybe Cain did not know or just made a mistake.**"

1. God had set the example when he sacrificed an animal to provide clothing of skins for Adam and Eve after they sinned.
2. This was not the first offering Cain (or Abel either) ever gave to God.

Genesis 4:3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

"In the process of time, it came to pass" is an expression that means that similar events had been going on before, but this time something would be different.

3. Prior to this occasion, Cain had probably traded food he had grown to Abel for a lamb for sacrifice and offered it to God.
4. What we observe here is a heart problem. In pride Cain probably thought, "The crops I produce with my labor are as good as the sheep Abel produces. Why should I have to buy from him? I will just offer some of the fruit of the ground!"
5. He ignored the fact that God had specified the offering to be an animal sacrifice. What God said was not the important factor to Cain.
6. This observation about Cain's heart problem is confirmed by two things:

- a. Notice God's words of correction to Cain. **Genesis 4:6-7** So the LORD said to Cain, "**Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?** And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it."
- b. God told him it was not too late for him to be accepted by the Lord. All Cain had to do was do what was right. God warned him that sin was trying to get hold of him to rule his life. Cain ignored the warning and, sure enough, retreated further into sin.
- c. See Cain's reaction to God's displeasure. **If this had been an innocent mistake in a first time offering, Cain would have been eager to make correction and please the Lord.** Instead he was angry and depressed.
- d. Cain refused to repent, refused to enter a relationship with God the way God prescribed, got furiously angry with his brother Abel and killed him. Cain eventually willfully left the presence of the Lord.

C. What did Abel do? Abel obeyed God!

1. Therefore what he did was right!
2. Therefore, Abel pleased God.
3. Maybe Cain did not understand why God specified a blood offering, but he clearly knew that God specified a blood offering. And still ...
4. Cain disobeyed and displeased God.

D. God often tells us to do things we do not understand or cannot be explained by human reasoning. **Isa. 55:9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

1. We may not understand why the Lord makes us His witnesses when it seems that angels could do so much better.
2. We may not understand why the Lord who owns heaven and earth commands us to give the tithe to Him.
3. We may not comprehend why the Lord says that He hates divorce even when two people cannot ever seem to get along.
4. We may not understand why the Lord requires honesty when a little bit of dishonesty would be so profitable.

5. But God's ways are higher than our ways, and God is always watching for our obedience to His Word, even when we do not understand.

And here is the main point being made about Abel for our benefit:

People of faith obey God.

People who walk in faith do what God says in His Word whether they can explain it or not.

I continue to be shocked at how many people, even people in church, when asked why they do not do a particular thing commanded in Scripture say, "It just does not seem right for me" or "It does not feel right to me."

And I just want to say, don't you understand that feelings come and go. A bad pepper in your taco can change your feelings in a heartbeat. That's not how believers decide how to live. That is not faith. **Faith is not following our feelings or following our impressions.**

Faith is obeying God.

And **God tells us His will in His Word.**

PRAYER:

- God, help us who are men and women who began in faith continue in faith.
- May our cries not be for what feels good or by tradition seems good but rather by what You in Your Word declare is good.
- May we not plead to You or to others for comfort or preference but instead may our delight be in doing the will of the Father.
- Grow us in faith, dear Lord, that our greatest desire is to obey You.

II. ENOCH

Heb. 11:5 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.

Question: **Enoch, what did you do?**

Why did God take you without the death dew upon your brow? Only one other was like that, the mighty Elijah! He was an awesome prophet, a miracle worker,

God's bold servant who stood for God against the king and hundreds of false priests and prophets. Were you like that Enoch?

No.

Then why are you included?

Answer: **I walked. I walked with God.**

One might ask, "So what?" Didn't everybody back then? It was only about 600 years after creation. No. Everybody did not walk with God back then.

A. Enoch walked with God, even when he had to walk alone.

1. Enoch's son was Methuselah - oldest man who ever lived - 969 years
2. Methuselah lived during **Gen. 6:5** Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*
3. **Enoch lived in vivid contrast to his day, different from the culture in which he lived.**
4. Listen to Enoch describe the many people whose hearts were hard against the Lord of his own day. **Jude 14, 15** 14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

B. God invites us to be men and women of faith who will live godly lives in the midst of an ungodly world.

1. God wants men today
 - Who will walk with Him when their friends revile and curse the name of the Savior.
 - Men who will be faithful to their wives,
 - keep their minds and lips pure,
 - and give the Lord some priority time rather than consuming all of their leisure time upon themselves.
2. God wants women today

- Who will put aside the vile standards of the world and demonstrate a heart that loves the Master.
 - Women who dress modestly because they seek the pleasure of their Heavenly Father more than the lustful glances of men.
 - Women who value the inward adornment of the heart more than the outward adornment of fine jewels and precious gems.
 - Women who love God enough to love their husbands and submit to him out of honor to their Lord, even when they know they are smarter than he is.
- 3. God wants young people today**
- Who will walk with Him. ...at school ...at work,
 - in their entertainment,
 - when hanging out,
 - in their life choices of schools and vocations and mates.
- 4. God is looking for men and women like Enoch - who will walk with God!**
- Gal. 5:16 says to walk in the Spirit.
 - Eph. 5:2 says to walk in love.
 - Col. 2:6 says as you received Christ, so walk in Him.
 - 1 John 1:7 says to walk in the light as He is in the light.
 - Not run – but walk

CONCLUSION: Do you want to make a start toward becoming that kind of man and woman? Come to Christ. It is impossible apart from Him and His saving grace.

Do you want to grow in your faith to be a man, a woman, a young person who obeys God and walks with God?