

Wednesday night Hebrews study
Wednesday, October 7, 2020
Hebrews 11:1-12

Prayer:

Hebrews 11:1-12:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the men of old gained approval.

³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. ⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. ⁶ And 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 seek Him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.

This is the first section on faith:

- Verse gives a very good definition of faith.
- The assurance of things hoped for. We are looking for something in the future and we have some form of sureness of this. This is the “already but not yet.” This means we are already saved but not yet. If we were totally saved and in Heaven looking right at this wonderful city we would not need faith.
- This is further explained as faith is the conviction of things that are unseen.

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- Verse 2 summarizes what the next 37 verses will be about.

ESV Study notes:

Heb. 11:1–40 *By Faith. Faith consists of persistent hope in the promises of God, and it is such faith, as 10:39 indicates, that obtains salvation on the last day. Here faith is illustrated from OT examples.*

Heb. 11:1 assurance. *Greek hypostasis, also translated “confidence” (3:14). hoped for. On hope, see 3:6; 6:11, 18; 7:19; 10:23. conviction of things not seen. By defining faith (Gk. pistis) as “assurance” and “conviction,” the author indicates that biblical faith is not a vague hope grounded in imaginary, wishful thinking. Instead, faith is a settled confidence that something in the future—something that is not yet seen but has been promised by God—will actually come to pass because God will bring it about. Thus biblical faith is not blind trust in the face of contrary evidence, not an unknowable “leap in the dark”; rather, biblical faith is a confident trust in the eternal God who is all-powerful, infinitely wise, eternally trustworthy—the God who has revealed himself in his word and in the person of Jesus Christ, whose promises have proven true from generation to generation, and who will “never leave nor forsake” his own (13:5). Such faith in the unseen realities of God is emphasized throughout ch. 11 (e.g., 11:7, 8; cf. v. 3) and has provided confidence and assurance to all who receive Christ as their Lord and Savior.*

Heb. 11:2 *The people of old (Gk. presbyteroi, “elders”), especially those listed as examples of faith throughout the chapter, received commendation in the form of a good testimony from God. The author does not focus on their failings (e.g., Gen. 9:20–27; 12:10–20; 17:17–21; 18:11–15), since his goal is to positively illustrate what faith looks like and to connect the current people of God with this “cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1).*

- Starting in verse 3 the preacher starts at the beginning of time and works his way forward about faith.
- Verse 3 gives us the idea that God created everything out of nothing. Gen 1 gives us this idea as well.
- The Greek word translated “worlds” or “universe” can actually mean “ages.” This is a plural noun so it could not mean that God only created the earth, but that God created all.
- What we see is not made out of things also seen.
- The only way to understand this is by faith. This is important.

ESV Study Note:

Heb. 11:3 *God's creation of the universe was accomplished by his word (Gk. rhēma). So that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible is consistent with the doctrine of creation ex nihilo (Latin, “from nothing”), but is not itself a full statement about this reality. It does, however, seem to correct Greco-Roman notions about eternally existing matter. The idea that God created the visible*

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universe out of some other kind of invisible (“not ... visible”) matter is not in the author's mind; rather, he is saying that God did not make the universe out of any preexisting matter as humans know it, which is close to saying that he made it “out of nothing.” Further support for this idea is found in [Gen. 1:1](#); [Ps. 33:6, 9](#); [90:2](#); [John 1:3](#); [Acts 14:15](#); [Rom. 4:17](#).

- Abel is talked about in verse 4. The preach takes out of Jewish history these thoughts and things. Abel still speaks: The ESV has a good study note:

Heb. 11:4 *Abel's sacrifice was acceptable to God ([Gen. 4:4, 7](#)) while Cain's was not (cf. [Matt. 23:35](#); [1 John 3:12](#)). commended as righteous. The acceptance of the offering was evidence of God's acceptance of the person (see [Gen. 4:7](#)). still speaks. The story of Abel's faith, as recorded in the Bible, still speaks to generation after generation. This mention of Abel's faith indicates that, from the very outset of human history, some OT figures were saved by means of faith (though [Heb. 10:4](#) reminds readers that the faith of those OT saints was effective only because of the future sacrifice of Christ, which animal sacrifices foreshadowed).*

- Verse 5 is about Enoch. This is found in Gen 5:21-24. He is one of the few people who have never died.

ESV Study Note:

Heb. 11:5 *Enoch was taken up. [Genesis 5:21–24](#) indicates that Enoch did not die but that God “took” him. having pleased God. Genesis also states (twice) that Enoch “walked with God” ([Gen. 5:22, 24](#)), and this phrase is interpreted in the Septuagint as Enoch having “pleased God.”*

- Verse 6 talks more about how we please God. As the preacher's examples show, it is impossible to please God without faith. We cannot approach God without faith.
- This goes along with the theme of Hebrews and the theme is that we are not good enough and our sacrifices are not good enough to please God.
- Verse 7 gets into Noah. Noah had faith. According to a literal reading of the Bible they had never seen rain, yet Noah believed God and build this Ark.

ESV Study Notes:

Heb. 11:6 to please him. *The Septuagint of Genesis states that certain patriarchs “pleased God” (using Gk. euaresteō to translate the Hb. for “walked with God”): Enoch ([Gen. 5:22, 24](#)), Noah ([Gen. 6:9](#)), Abraham ([Gen. 17:1](#); [24:40](#); [48:15](#)), and Isaac ([Gen. 48:15](#); cf. Joseph in [Gen. 39:4](#)). Each is discussed in [Hebrews 11](#). Faith includes belief in God's existence (possibly a reference to [v. 3](#)) and especially in God's trustworthiness to keep his promise to reward his followers (see [10:35](#); [11:26](#); cf. [10:23](#) and note on [11:1](#)). draw near. See note on [4:16](#).*

Heb. 11:7 Noah. *Cf. [Gen. 6:9–9:29](#). events as yet unseen. See [Heb. 11:1](#). reverent fear. Cf. [5:7](#) and [12:28](#), where such an attitude is also commended. saving of his household. A visible example of God's salvation. Condemned the world means that Noah's righteous obedience to*

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God showed, by contrast, how sinful the world was to reject Noah's message (cf. [2 Pet. 2:5](#)) and God's moral standards. "World" in Hebrews generally signifies creation ([Heb. 4:3; 9:26; 10:5](#)), though here it especially pictures sinful humanity (see [11:38](#); cf. [John 15:18-19](#); [James 4:4](#); [1 John 2:15](#)). **heir of the righteousness that comes by faith**. Noah is called "righteous" in [Gen. 7:1](#), after his faithful response in building the ark ([Gen. 6:22](#)).

- Noah went out by faith. Noah did not know where He was going.

ESV Study Note:

[Heb. 11:8-9](#) God called **Abraham** to leave Haran and go to Canaan ([Gen. 12:1-4](#)). **obeyed**. Faith leads to obedience to God's promise and calling. **inheritance**. Also used of Christian salvation ([Heb. 9:15](#)). **not knowing where he was going**. See [11:1](#). **land of promise**. See [Gen. 15:18-21](#). On God's promises, see [Heb. 6:12-15](#). **foreign land**. See [11:13-16](#).

- Abraham lived in tents. Ruth Graham Lotz (Billy Graham's daughter) did some study and showed that Haran (where Abraham left) was an advanced culture with plumbing and heat.

ESV Study Note:

[Heb. 11:10](#) Abraham is portrayed as yearning for the heavenly **city** (developed further in [vv. 13-16; 12:22-24; 13:13-14](#)).

- Verses 11-12 wrap up the intro of "faith." He now talks about Sarah. He will return to Abraham in verse 17.

ESV Study Notes:

[Heb. 11:11-12](#) **Sarah**. See [Gen. 21:1-7](#). That Sarah laughed, apparently in unbelief ([Gen. 18:9-15](#)), is potentially problematic for her role as an example of faith; however: (1) the author is happy to speak of the true faith of Sarah despite her failings, and (2) Sarah apparently later had a change of heart, as her laughter became a genuine expression of joy at the birth of Isaac ([Gen. 21:6](#)), whose name means "laughter." **received power to conceive** (lit., "power for the foundation of seed"). Although some translations give Abraham as the subject, it is best to take "Sarah" as the subject here (as the esv does), because (1) both Sarah's name and "herself" (Gk. *autē*) are in the nominative case (indicating the subject of the sentence), and because (2) making Abraham the subject requires either an unusual grammatical understanding of the words for "Sarah herself" or an assumption that an early copyist made an error in transcribing those two words. **considered him faithful**. See [Heb. 10:23](#). **stars ... sand**. An allusion to [Gen. 22:17](#).