

Jesus: Our great High Priest Forever
(Week 20)
Hebrews 10:38-11:7
“Where There is Faith”

Introduction

“But My righteous one will live by faith.” **Hebrews 10:38**

The first portion of the book of **Hebrews (Chapters 1-10)** is very doctrinal in nature. The emphasis is upon the superiority of Christ. We have seen that He is a “better man” than any other (**Chapters 1-2**). Then, we learned that Christ has a “better mission” than that of Moses (**Chapters 3-4:15**). From there, we are shown that He also has a “better ministry” as the Ultimate High Priest (**5:1-10:18**). At this point in the book the focus turns to personal application. The preacher is ready to give his “final invitation”, as it were. As we have previously stated, the purpose of good preaching is to illicit a response. **Hebrews 11-13** is directed to that end. If we truly believe the things that we have learned about Christ, then are we willing to place our faith in Him?

The **Eleventh Chapter of Hebrews** is often called “The Faith Chapter” of the scriptures, just as others have named **1 Corinthians 13**, “The Love Chapter”. Others still have declared this passage as “The Who’s Who of Faith”. Both titles are appropriate, for **Hebrews 11** does, in fact, offer the most powerfully assembled examples of living by faith in all of the scriptures. We must remember that this writing was originally as a letter, and therefore, not broken down into chapter and verse the way that we read it in its current form. Many Bible teachers, myself included, feel that the **Eleventh Chapter** begins in the wrong place. The writer actually begins his new line of thought concerning living by faith in **verse 10:38**. It is there, in my humble opinion, that the new chapter of the book should begin. The practical application of being “enlightened” with the truth of Christ is to believe in Him and proceed to live accordingly. The Bible calls this “walking by faith”:

“For we walk by faith and not by sight.” **2 Corinthians 5:7**

In **verse 10:38** the writer of *Hebrews* quotes from **Habakuk 2:4**, which says **“But the righteous one will live by his faith”**. It is this powerful verse that served as the catalyst of reform for a young man named Martin Luther in the year 1519. You see, Luther was a monk in the Roman Catholic Church, and he saw first hand how corrupt the church had become. As he was reading through the book of *Romans*, written by the Apostle Paul, he was grievously convicted of his sin, and that of his church. Luther could find no remedy in performing the many rituals of the church that the various priests had prescribed for him. Luther felt alone and helpless, hopelessly longing for the acceptance of God. That is when The Spirit of God spoke to his heart and illuminated for him, these powerful words of *Habakuk*, which were not only repeated by the writer of *Hebrews*, but by Paul as well, in his letter to The Romans:

“For the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.
just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.” **Romans 1:17**

Martin Luther was never the same after God revealed to him that no matter how hard that he tried, he would never find God’s favor by earning it. No, a person can only please God by believing what He says (**Hebrews 11:6**)! This revelation of truth, given to Martin Luther, was the beginning of what is now commonly known as “The Protestant Reformation”. Isn’t it amazing what a simple verse of scripture can do in a persons life, if it is received, believed, and lived out?

Many people have a misconception of faith. They believe that faith is a “blind leap” that is taken without a shred of hard evidence to “shore it up”, as it were. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Genuine Christian faith has a multitude of evidence for its justification. This is exactly why the writer of *Hebrews* declares:

“Now faith is the reality (or substance) for what is hoped for.
the proof (or evidence) of what is not seen.” **Hebrews 11:1**

You see, according to the writer of *Hebrews*, a Christian's faith is actual **substance** and **evidence** of the existence of God! Substance and evidence are by no means words used to describe a "blind leap". They are, in fact, words that would be used to describe both a scientific and legal argument. The Greek word for "reality" (or substance - depending upon your *Bible* translation) is hypostasis. The word actually comes from two Greek words and basically means to "shore up from underneath". Faith for the believer is pictured in this verse as "the solid ground which enables one to stand firmly in his or her convictions". It is our faith that makes it possible for us to firmly believe in something that our eyes cannot see.

The preacher goes on to give an example using the universe surrounding us. As we look around and behold with our own eyes the complexity of creation, only a fool would say that it happened by accident. The more that scientists study the world in which we live, the more they discover the intricate eco-systems by which all life survives. One seemingly small interruption in these complex systems could cause life on earth as we know it to cease. Even as we speak, many scientists are concerned that the honey-bee is in danger of becoming extinct, and according to their research, if that should happen, the lack of pollination that would occur as a result would lead to worldwide famine, starvation, and death for humanity! Let that soak in for a moment. If the honey bee were to disappear, then possibly SO WOULD WE! Now that's a pretty intricate cycle is it not? That is by DESIGN my friends... and not by accident.

Many scientist today actually believe, and fervently preach, that the world we see around us is the result of a random explosion followed by billions of years of subsequent evolution. They claim that anyone who does not accept this "scientific fact" is, therefore, somehow mentally deficient. They are convinced that all the complex systems found in every corner of the universe simply just happened by chance. It all began with nothing... and then IT exploded! Order does not come from chaos. That is like saying a print shop exploded, and Webster's Dictionary burst forth as a result! This is not "science". It is absurdity.

The writer of *Hebrews* explains how faith can be substantive simply by looking at creation. When we look at the world, it causes us to believe in a God that we cannot see. What we **see**, convinces us of what we do not. When we hear the Word of God regarding Christ, we believe it, even though none of us ever saw Jesus or heard His audible voice. We have been given plenty of evidence to consider, and this evidence has assured us that Christ is exactly Who He claims to be. Just like looking around us convinces us that Creation is proof of a Creator. Our faith is based upon evidence, not mere superstition. We DO have solid ground upon which to stand, when we say that we believe in Christ. The first ten Chapters of *Hebrews* have demonstrated perfectly for us just Who Jesus is. Now, we must choose whether or not to believe the evidence. If we BELIEVE, then our faith must be LIVED. This week in **verses 11:4-7**, we will examine the lives of three *Old Testament* men of faith, who clearly show us how to live by faith: A Worshipping Faith, A Walking Faith, and A Working Faith. Let us now look to the lives of Abel, Enoch, and Noah.

Abel: A Worshipping Faith (vs. 4)

Abel was the second son of Adam and Eve. He was born after his parents were expelled from the Garden of Eden, because of their disobedience to God's command. *The Bible* tells us that he was a shepherd (**Genesis 4:2**). In the course of time, Abel made a decision to offer a sacrifice to God. He chose lambs from his flocks as an offering, not just any lambs mind you, but of his "firstborn" lambs. He slaughtered them and burnt their fat portions upon the altar as a gift for The LORD. To give of his firstborn was proof that Abel honored God above anything else. He didn't just give. He gave to God first. So many people today want to give God their leftovers. Their leftover time, their leftover money, and their leftover allegiance. In short, they put their own selfish desires ahead of serving God. To truly worship God is to offer Him our very best. Abel proved that he loved God, by doing just that.

The writer of *Hebrews* states that Abel made this sacrifice BY FAITH (**vs. 4**). Let us take a moment to examine what that means. Where did Abel get the faith that led him to make the sacrifice that he made? *The Bible* actually tells us where "faith" originates. Since Abel's sacrifice is one of the first acts of faith mentioned in the scriptures, it is very important to understand where his faith originated.

"So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Romans 10:7 (NKJV)

So did Abel wake up one day and decide just to "sacrifice a lamb"; a sacrifice, mind you, that would not only display Abel's full devotion to God, but would also point to the time when God would offer

His only Son as a sacrificial Lamb to save the world? I believe not. This was not a random act of chance, but rather, a response of faith to what God had led Abel to do. In order to have faith, one must first “hear the message” of God (**Romans 10:7**). Abel’s sacrifice was an act of obedience, and THAT is why it was accepted by God. This is how we know that it was an act of faith. Abel not only believed God, but by faith he obeyed what God had said. Abel offered a sacrifice that would point perfectly to the plan that God had preordained to save the world. Abel offered a blood sacrifice from something that he did not produce. Only God can produce life, and the lifeblood of those firstborn lambs were a representation of the blood of Christ, the “Firstborn” of God, which would be offered to take away our sin. Abel offered a sacrifice of faith on God’s terms, and it was accepted.

Cain on the other hand, who was not a shepherd, but a gardener (**Genesis 4:2**) brought God something that he had grown himself. He didn’t even bring the first fruits of his crops, but rather, *The Bible* says that he brought “some of his produce”. Cain is a perfect example of a self-righteous religious man, who believes that he can offer up his own works and please God. You see, Cain offered up crops that he had grown himself and presented for God’s approval. This is the difference between religion and Christianity. The religious man thinks that he can be saved by his own doing. (Just ask Martin Luther if that works). No one has been, or ever will be, accepted by God based on their own merit and achievement. Abel understood that he needed something to die in his stead, while Cain thought that God ought to accept whatever he chose to offer. God rejected Cain’s offering and commanded him to do as Abel had done (**Genesis 4:5-7**). But instead of hearing the Word of God and responding by faith, Cain became angry and murdered his own brother. What a horrific response to God’s command. God had actually pleaded with Cain to do what was right, but sadly, his own selfish pride led to his downfall (**Genesis 4:6-7**). Tragically, many today would prefer to silence the believers, rather than heed the pleadings of Christ and respond in obedient faith. Abel was the first person to ever be martyred for his faith, but sadly, he certainly would not be the last. Abel did not die in vain, however, and his faith still serves as a witness for us today:

“By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith, he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith.” **Hebrews 11:4**

You see, Abel’s obedience of faith led him to offer a sacrifice. And, because he offered a sacrifice of faith, he was accepted by God. Genuine faith will lead every believer to offer the proper sacrifice to God. And what is the proper *New Testament* sacrifice of faith? Answer: Yourself.

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.” **Romans 12:1**

If we truly believe the Word of God, that Jesus gave His life to redeem us, then by faith we will offer to Him the sacrifice that He has required of us. We will offer Him our very selves, as a living sacrifice to obey and serve Him. By faith, Abel gave God his very best. The best that we have to offer is all that we are. To be a Christian is not just to “religiously” believe in Jesus. It is to surrender our very lives to Jesus. This is the True Worship of Faith.

Enoch: A walk of Faith (vs.5-6)

I never cease to be amazed at the different plans that God has for His people. We just learned about a man named Abel, who was obedient to God and died for his faith as a result. Now we will discover a man named Enoch, whose faith saved him from ever experiencing death! Enoch was the great grandfather of Noah. His name means “dedicated”. *The Bible* tells us that Enoch “walked with God” (**Genesis 5:24**). To “walk with God” simply means to **dedicate** one’s life to the pursuit of knowing God above all else. Jesus laid down His life so that you too could “walk with God”! Enoch’s pursuit of God was the priority of his life. God, in His grace, had even given Enoch insight into the judgment that was to come upon the earth in Noah’s day. We know this because Enoch had named his son “Methuselah”, which means “his death shall bring judgment”. For those of you who care to do the math, you will discover that just after Methuselah died at the ripe old age of 969 years, the great flood came and

destroyed everyone, save Noah and his family. So, in fact, the death of Methuselah had ushered in the judgement of God upon this wicked earth, just as Enoch had prophesied when naming his son.

Enoch didn't get as much time to walk upon the earth as did Methuselah. Methuselah lived longer than anyone else who ever lived. When compared to other "Genesis people", Enoch wasn't around very long at all. *The Bible* tells us that after he had grown very close to God in his walk of faith, Enoch was "taken away" by God at the age of three hundred sixty-five. Compared to the longevity of those who lived in those days, Enoch left this world as a very young man! He is one of only two people on earth who never died. The other is the Prophet Elijah that was taken up in a whirlwind (**2 Kings 2-4**).

Many people today do not believe in the "rapture of the church". I would argue that Enoch and Elijah would say otherwise! Enoch spent his life dedicated to drawing near to God, and he was raptured for his faith. I believe that the church of Jesus Christ has been delivered from sin, so they can be dedicated (set apart) for the pursuit of God. We are commanded in **Hebrews 10:22** to "draw near to God" for Christ has made a way for us to do so. We have been given the privilege to "draw near", because the blood of Jesus has made it possible for us to know God intimately. Allow me to speak plainly. You can have as much of God as you want today, thanks to Christ! If you are not drawing near to God this morning, that is on you and no one else. Christ has provided your way, in fact, He IS your way (**John 14:6**), so just how close are you to God this morning? To Enoch nothing else mattered. His faith made him yearn to walk with God.

There is a verse in Micah that says:

"Mankind, He has told each of you what is good and what it is The LORD requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

I LOVE that verse! If anyone ever says to you that they don't really know what God expects of them, quote them this verse. Nothing could be clearer than that. God expects us to act justly, which means to obey His commands. He expects us to love faithfulness, the Hebrew here is "*Chesed*", which literally means "the lovingkindness or grace of God", and to "walk humbly" with God. Walking humbly with God simply means that, like Enoch, our faith should lead us to a place where God is all that matters. To know Him should mean everything to a believer. That, my friends, is a walk of faith. If we are doing that when Christ returns, then we, like Enoch, will be taken up as well! Works for me. How about you? Look to the lives of these great man of faith and hear the words of **verse 6**:

"Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to Him must believe that he exists and that he earnestly rewards those who seek Him."

Hebrews 11:6

Pretty much says it all, doesn't it? In the light of Enoch and his pursuit of God, this verse needs no further explanation. We have been called to walk with God!

Noah: A Working Faith (vs.7)

We have seen a man who sacrificed and died for his faith (Abel), and we have seen one whose wholehearted pursuit of God enabled him to escape death (Enoch). Which brings us to Noah, a man who was chosen to do a great **work** of faith. As far as we know, Abel and Enoch led relatively quiet lives of faith, but God intended for Noah's walk of faith to be on public display. God was bringing judgment upon the world. Listen to how *The Bible* describes the days of Noah:

"When The LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, The LORD regretted that He made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."

Genesis 6:5-6

Wow! Did you see that?! All that the people ever thought about was doing evil. When I was young, I would read this verse, and I couldn't imagine what that would be like to live in a world that was filled with such evil. I'm sorry to say, that I can imagine it now. Jesus warned that when the time draws near for His second coming, the world will be just like it was in the days of Noah (**Matthew 24:37**). Child

of God, please allow me to give you some advice this morning. Don't set your heart on the things of this world. Start looking above. We are living in the last days my friends. Turn your faith-dial up a notch and set your thoughts upon Jesus (**Hebrews 3:1**).

Noah didn't get to live a life of solitude like some monk up in the mountains. God called Noah to build a massive boat in a place where there was no water, and no one had ever even heard of rain! Can you even imagine what that must have been like? Oh, the conversations that must have taken place as Noah was building that Ark! And, it wasn't like this lasted for just a little while, it took 100 years! Peter tells us that as Noah built, he preached! He tried to warn the people to turn to God in repentance, but NO One would listen (**2 Peter 2:5**). Have you ever tried to tell someone about Jesus and their need of salvation only to have them make fun of you or ignore you altogether? If so, then you have a little insight into the life of Noah. His faith in God called him to do something so incredible that everyone thought that he was crazy... that is until it started to rain. Then, it was too late.

Just like Noah, we have been called to do something that, to the world, seems insane. As I stated earlier, we are surrounded by those who think we are mentally deficient simply because we hold on to a faith that God created the heavens and the earth. And the gospel?! They really think we are crazy when we speak of mankind's desperate need of repentance and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. But you know what? Noah's act of faith managed to save the human race, not to mention a whole bunch of "critters" that would have become extinct. Noah wasn't able to get everyone on board the ark, but he did manage to save some. And that, my friends, is the very same reason that Christ has called us to go and make disciples. We are not going to reach everyone, but by the grace of God, we will reach some of them. If we are only willing to carry out our mission of faith.

I believe that James would have LOVED Noah. Why? Because James believed that if you truly had faith, then you would DO something about it:

"If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed', but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself."
James 2:15-17

Noah didn't just claim to have faith, He lived it out. And, because he lived it, he made a lasting difference. You are all here this morning because of Noah's "Working Faith". So there you have it. We are called to have faith. Worshipping Faith, Walking Faith, and Working Faith. And without such faith, it is impossible to please God!

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!