

By Faith

Hebrews 11:1-7

Chris Patton

June 2, 2024

Sermon Summary: This passage is about living a life of faith. It's about basing one's entire life — on the unshakable foundation of the unseen realities of who God is and what He promises. The main point of our text today and the entirety of chapter 11 is summarized in verse 6: “*And without faith it is impossible to please him.*” Apart from faith in unseen realities, evidenced in how we live our lives, it is impossible to please God.

Verse 1

Faith itself is objective evidence of unseen things. Much as the movement of a body in space in its orbit can serve as evidence of a much larger yet unseen body that's acting upon it, when we look at the lives of people of faith, we can see something of the power and the reality of something much greater than anything that can be seen acting upon them.

– Alisdair Roberts

“Faith operates in terms of the reality of the things that are anticipated. While others can drift aimless as if through empty space, faith moves in the powerful gravitational field of the realities hoped for and promised by God.” – Alisdair Roberts

- When the OT saints of Hebrews 11, such as Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Sarah, and Jacob, and Joseph and Moses and so on and so forth trusted God and obeyed God, come what may, they were like the earth orbiting around the sun.
- Their faith expressed in obedience and sacrifice; their faith-driven movement around the axis of God Himself as it were— was itself the evidence of, the proof of an unseen force. Their faith pointed to the glorious God in the center of it all who was the gravitational force animating their faith in the first place.

Verse 2

- The saints of old, received their commendation from God because their faith expressed in worshipful obedience, sacrifice and perseverance bore powerful witness to Gods existence, Gods faithfulness and Gods glory.
- The Christian life is not primarily about figuring out perplexities, solving problems, or avoiding danger; rather the Christian life is primarily about living a life of faith in the unseen God come what may. That IS the Christian life...it is fundamentally about faith being tested as by fire and passing the test, resulting in praise and glory to Jesus Christ on the final day (1 Peter 3:7).
- Application: May we make sure we are orienting our lives in the right gravitational field. If we do -- if you and I saturate our souls in who God is and in the good promises he makes to us... even in the midst of affliction, your sorrow, your tears, your agony—your life will be different, and you will be like the heroes of faith in Heb.11 whose faith even today speaks and brings glory to God.

Verse 3

- In verse 3, the author illustrates the essence of faith. He points out that “we” meaning the author and his audience, all believe that the things we see — that is the creation all around us—were created by God’s Word.
- He says we all believe God spoke all things into existence. And we believe that on the basis of God’s Word. We believe the words of Genesis 1... And God said — “Let there be light” and so on and so forth.
- The reason this matters is because it shows that the only kind of faith that God explicitly commends is faith that is firmly tethered to God’s Word; the only kind of faith that God explicitly approves of is faith that is firmly tethered to revealed truth.
- This reminds us — The most important question of the hour for the believer is NEVER “What does man say?” It is ALWAYS rather— “What hath God said?”
- God’s Word says— no matter how treacherous and dangerous and perplexing and shrouded in mystery our journey to heaven gets, God is faithful at all times and in all circumstances He is sovereign, loving and good. If I really believe that...my life then by faith needs to actually move and orbit around the gravitational pull of those truths. My life needs to bear witness to the fact that there is a God; He is real and He is faithful and good.

Verse 4

- In verse 4, the survey of the Hall of Faith begins.
- Abel’s offering, his sacrifice was a sacrifice that was an expression of faith in God and that’s why the Lord had regard for it. It wasn’t a mere ritual or going through the motions as apparently it was for Cain in his offering.
- There is a good lesson here. Let us not be content with the mere externals of Christian spirituality -- of going to church and doing the Christian thing externally--but rather let us truly seek to live lives of worshipful faith and devotion to our Savior.

Verse 5

- While we don’t exactly know how his faith worked itself out, the reason Enoch pleased God was because of His faith.

Verse 6

- In verse 6, we come to the crux of the matter -- the main lesson of our text today and this entire chapter:

Hebrews 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

- The kind of faith that pleases God: Faith that believes God exists, and draws near to God in the assurance that He rewards our seeking after Him.
- While one aspect of the reward the author refers to likely includes answers to prayers of various kinds — commentator PT O’Brien points out that the ultimate reward is God Himself. He points out that the reward of Enoch’s faith was he was brought into God’s very presence.

- While God delights to answer our prayers — the ultimate reward of faith is God! And there is nothing better! Closeness to God. Intimacy with God. Fellowship with God. We experience that in part now; and will be in full, when we enter into glory.

Verse 7

- In verse 7, the author continues on, by highlighting Noah's faith. Consider, Noah had no external supporting evidence that a flood was coming to destroy the earth except for the Word of the Lord. In ancient times He must have seemed to his neighbors, and friends and relatives to be a complete lunatic to build a ship that was over a football field and a quarter long. Imagine the expense. Imagine the effort that it took for him to do this...and then to go get and load all those animals onto it!
- This is the life of faith. Noah had one thing and one thing only — a word from God — a promise from God.
And his life orbited as a life of faith of the "sun" as it were of who God was and is and what He had promised to do.
- By orbiting his life around God in this manner, the author of Hebrews tells us, He greatly pleased God... and God used Noah to preserve the entire human race.

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Consider taking time to read Hebrews 11:1-7 out loud. What initial insights or observations of the text do you have?
- Re-read all the notes under the heading "Verse 1" above. What can be some of the consequences in the lives of believers if we fail to orient our lives around "the gravitational field" of God and His promises?
- What are some take home lessons from the lives of Abel, Enoch and Noah? Consider in particular Noah's example. What does his life of faith teach us?
- Who is someone you know or in history that has seemed to exemplify and model Hebrews 11 kind of faith?
- Take a minute and consider, how have you observed God's grace in your own life helping you in times of difficulty to remain focused on Christ and trusting in Christ?
- What does it look like practically for us to more fully orient our lives around God and His promises? What action steps might you like to take to do that?
- Consider taking time, asking God by His Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith.