

## **Hopeful Faith Is Looking Forward Hebrews 11:1-16 (Vv. 10, 15-16)**

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### **I. Historical Background & Biblical Context**

Faith is defined as a constant outlook of trust in God, whereby humans abandon all reliance on their own efforts and put their full confidence in Him, His Word and His promises. This definition of faith links it with hope and then goes on to show how this hope provided power to sacrifice and love. Faith is believing that God exists, that He rewards those who seek Him and that we can hope in Him because His promises will always be true. As Christians, we know that faith is foundational to our relationship with God, and we can trace that through Scripture.

Faith is personified through the records of the Old Testament. Hebrews 11 describes how various people responded in faith to what God said to them. In this chapter, the people were challenged to live lives of faith according to the examples seen in those who by faith were faithful to God in their earthly pilgrimages. The author, through his list of biblical examples, provided strong support for his contention that God's people must be people of faith, even in the face of disheartening difficulties. Faith allows us to be justified before God and continue in obedience. We all have the opportunity to continue living in faith and being obedience to God.

### **II. The Lesson: Hopeful Faith Is Looking Forward**

#### **1. vv. 1-3.**

Verse 1 not only defines "faith" but also describes what it does. First faith provides substance (assurance, confidence).

Secondly, Faith provides evidence or conviction. Assurance includes the hope of future things, the coming resurrection, the return of the Savior and the glorification of the Saints. Evidence or conviction refers to present unseen realities such as the forgiveness

of sin through Christ's sacrifice and the intercession of Christ in heaven for His followers. The persons listed in this chapter acted with true faith and as a result, God approved of them. The faith-filled actions of these Saints ranged from the simple words they spoke to the giving of their very lives. This shows us that faith infiltrates every area of our life, and every act of faith matters to God.

From the very beginning to the present moment, faith is needed. Creation itself shows that just because something can't be seen, doesn't mean that it will not happen. God made the visible out of the invisible. God spoke the universe into existence. Our future is not based on what we see today, but on something we do not see: God. Faith is at the basis of all life.

## **2. vv. 4-7.**

In the following verses, God gives examples of faithful servants. "By faith Abel's offering was better than Cain. By faith, he was commended as righteous". The character of the brothers made one's offering acceptable and the other's offering unacceptable. Genesis records that even before the rejection of Cain's offering, his heart was not right with God (Gen. 4:7). Although Abel is dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

Enoch was only mentioned in Genesis 5:21-24 as "the man who walked with God and he was not, for God took him". It was by faith that he was taken up to heaven without dying. For before he was taken up, he pleased God. It is clear that Enoch trusted God. Unless we trust God, it is impossible to please Him; anyone who comes to God must believe that God is there and that He helps or rewards those who seek Him.

Noah believed God as well. Noah was asked by God to do in faith things that were at odds with his former experience. He had never seen rain (Gen. 2:5). God told him to build a ship because of the coming flood (Gen. 6:13-17). When God told Noah about the calamity that would come, Noah believed God's warning, and he built the Ark to save his family and creatures. Building a boat in

the middle of nowhere, something that took years and years, demonstrated a tremendous and hopeful faith in the unseen. As a result of his faith, Noah showed that everyone else in the world was wrong. By his faith, Noah condemned the world because he believed God's warning, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

### **3. vv. 8-12.**

In this chapter, several verses are devoted to the example of Abraham. The author's purpose is not to prove that Abraham had faith but to give examples that illustrate a life of faith and encourage Christians to have similar faith when they are under pressure. Abraham did step out in faith, going to the place God promised him; but his faith was less than perfect. This is seen by comparing Genesis 12:1-5 with Acts 7:2-4, where it is evident that Abraham first went halfway to where God called him and obeyed eventually completely. Yet thousands of years later, God did not remember the delayed obedience, only the faith.

Abraham lived as a "sojourner" in the land God promised, never owning any of it except the plots he and Sarah were buried on. Because they had no permanent home, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in tents instead of houses. They looked forward to a better city, "the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (V. 10).

Sarah's faith was not perfect. She first laughed in unbelief (Gen. 18:9-15), and then she learned to laugh in faith (Gen. 21:6). It was this faith that enabled Sarah to "receive strength to conceive seed" (V. 11). God gave her the strength, but Sarah received it by faith. Because of the faith of Sarah and Abraham, thousands, even millions of descendants were born. Their faith had an impact on more lives than they ever dreamed of.

### **4. vv. 13-16.**

The promise of the Messiah was made to Abraham and Sarah, and they believed the promise. Yet they died having never received it,

only seeing it in faith. They carefully considered the promise, assured that the promise was valid because God made the promise. Abraham and Sarah received the promise with the understanding that the world was not their home. They knew God had a better and more enduring home for them in heaven. When we remember there is a spiritual reality, a heavenly home that is our real home, faith is realized. If these examples of faith endured thorough difficulty and discouragement, then we who have received the promises have even more reason for endurance.

For those courageous enough to believe in God and to believe in Him as real, and heaven and eternal life as real, “God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (V. 16). The believers’ place in heaven is secured as soon as they trust the work Christ did on the cross for their justification before God. The cloud of witnesses Paul used as an example were faithful and obedient to God so that they would one day receive their rewards.

### **III. Conclusion**

As believers, we are called to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before us, trusting the faithfulness of God. This faith and hope will enable us to live in whatever insecurity or discomfort required in order to pursue God’s purpose for His world and His people.

#### Sunday Morning Bible Study Notes

1. What about the faith of the Old Testament saints in this passage is helpful in your daily walk with the Lord? What are some blessings received by the saints that are mentioned?
2. In what way today “do people condemn the world” by having faith? What are some examples?
3. Why does faith produce obedience?
4. How would you explain faith to someone?