

Why is Faith so Important?

“Faith Pleases God”

Hebrews 11:4-7

April 2, 2026

For months we have been walking through the first 10 chapters of Hebrews. The author, guided by the Holy Spirit, is speaking to the Jewish Christians who are being persecuted for their faith and tempted to return to the safe and familiar Old Covenant Judaism. In the first 10 chapters, the author is declaring Jesus is Superior. And he illustrates his point by declaring Jesus as superior to all the heroes and patriarchs of the Jewish faith. He is a superior high priest. The Spirit is saying, the old covenant, the temple sacrifices, the temple ceremonies and temple rituals are obsolete. They have been replaced by a better covenant, a better sacrifice and a perfect high priest sitting at the right hand of God. He concluded chapter 10 with the strongest warning in all the Bible reminding the Jewish Christians that the Jewish Law says that

“there is no sacrifice and no mercy for anyone who has disregarded the Law of Moses. So how much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who rejects the Son of God.”

His final warning is to the one who is an apostate. The one who rejects the Messiah. He says, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God.” The author concludes chapter 10 with an exhortation or encouragement saying in verse 39, “But WE are not those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have FAITH and preserve their souls.” his exhortation serves as the introduction to Chapter 11, the Hall of Faith- the GOATS , where the author defines faith and cites characters in Scripture chronologically beginning in Genesis that illustrate faith. The chapter is logically written in these groupings.

- **Faith Defined** (vv.1–3)
- **Faith Demonstrated (Early World)** (vv.4–7)
- **Faith Trusting Promises (Patriarchs)** (vv.8–22)
- **Faith Acting Courageously (Moses/Exodus)** (vv.23–31)

- **Faith Victorious and Suffering (Israel's History)** (vv.32–38)
- **Faith Fulfilled in Christ** (vv.39–40)

What is Faith? Brett covered this last week, but I will review to build on the definition of faith.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

- Faith consists of *knowledge (notitia)*, *the assent of that knowledge (assensus)*-“*or illumination - where the light comes on*”, *resulting in trust (fiducia)*. The source of our knowledge, the source of our progressive understanding and our trust **IS** the Scripture and the Spirit of God.
- Faith is not wishful thinking—it is a settled confidence in God’s promises, even when they are not yet visible. Faith is revealed to us through God’s Word. Faith is affirmed as the Scripture “rings true” to each individual.

Romans 10:17 Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Hebrews 11:2-3 For by it the people of old received their commendation.³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

- So, we are exhorted or strongly encouraged in chapter 10:39 to embrace our faith as it “preserves our souls.” Faith is the foundation of our salvation. The author has encouraged us to embrace our faith and has defined faith in verses 1-3. He now begins to illustrate or

support his argument from Scripture by the heroes of faith the Hebrew readers would all know.

- The audience is very well acquainted with the Scriptures and, as each name is cited, it would trigger their memory. It would trigger their memory of the history and the stories of the saints whose faith has been commended. Their faith has been recognized throughout history, praised and approved.
- The goal is to encourage and inspire them to secure their faith, to fully cement their faith in JESUS as the Messiah, their perfect high priest, and the deliverer of a better covenant. The illustrations given isolate faith from works because the Jews needed to separate from a focus on the Law and works to a new covenant of grace. Today we will cover three of these saints that illustrate faith. We will consider the stories of Able, Enoch and Noah. From their life stories we will see: **How faith demonstrated**. We will start by reading the text together.

Hebrews 11:4-7 ⁴By faith **Abel** offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

⁵By faith **Enoch** was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶And 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.

⁷By faith **Noah**, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, ^[g]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.

Verse 4: By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain.

Do you remember the story of Cain and Able?

Genesis 4:1-16 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten^[a] a man with the help of the LORD.”² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a **keeper of sheep**, and Cain a **worker of the ground**.³ In the course of time, Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the **fruit of the ground**,⁴ and Abel also brought of **the firstborn of his flock** and of their fat portions. And the LORD had **regard for Abel** and his offering,⁵ but **for Cain** and his offering **he had no regard**. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.⁶ The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted?^[b] And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for^[c] you, and you must rule over it.”

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother.^[d] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?”¹⁰ And the LORD said, “**What have you done?** The voice of your brother's blood is **crying to me from the ground**.¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”¹³ Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.^[e] ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.¹⁶ Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod,^[f] east of Eden.

- Able was the first man of faith. He was the child of Adam and Eve. So, why are Adam and Eve not referenced as the first people of faith? Adam and Eve lived in the garden before the fall. They had seen God. They had seen the Shekinah glory of God. They walked with Him and talked with Him. They had communion with God and, in the fullest sense, knew God. So faith, as defined, was not involved. Adam and Eve were not required to have “conviction in things not seen.”

- Cain and Able were born outside of Eden and never had the opportunity to know God in the same way as Adam and Eve. Can you imagine the stories that they could have shared with Cain and Able and the regret that their parents would have expressed for their sin?
- Let's go back to **Genesis 3:15**. This is just following the fall of Adam and Eve. They had not yet received final judgment and been exiled from the garden. God is speaking to Satan, their deceiver. He says,

Genesis 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

- In the very beginning. God had a plan for redemption. In Genesis Chapter 3, God promises this redemption.
- To Satan, God is saying, the offspring of this woman will be the victor. Yes, you will bruise his heel and you are going to cause him much trouble, but He will bruise your head. He will have the last word and be the victor over you, Satan.
- Before God issued His final judgment on Adam and Eve, He showed His mercy and promised redemption. By the woman came sin and by the woman shall come the Savior. It would not come through the flesh of Adam because in Adam all died. The Saviour could only come from God and that Saviour was Jesus, born of a virgin.
- We know from Genesis 4 that Cain was a worker of the ground and Able was a keeper of the Sheep. Cain was a farmer and Able was a shepherd. Both were born into sin.
- The Genesis text tells us that “in the course of time” they brought an offering to the Lord. We can assume that there was a time and a place to which they brought their offering to the Lord. The place would have been an alter or “mercy seat” where they came to bring a sacrifice and worship God.

- We can also presume that the children of Adam and Eve were instructed in the way that they were to come to God in worship. This instruction would have come from God, and this is the very first time that sacrifice appears in Scripture. God could only be approached by a blood sacrifice.
- Cain and Able came at the same time to the same place to offer their sacrifice. God accepted one and rejected the other.

Back to our Text:

Hebrews 11:4 **By faith** Abel offered to God a **more acceptable sacrifice** than Cain, through which he was **commended as RIGHTEOUS**, God commending him by accepting his gifts.

- **“By faith.”** – Where did Able get his faith. Remember Romans 10:17 that says, “Faith comes by hearing.” After Adam and Eve sinned and realized they were naked, God killed some animals and provided their skins for covering. God communicated who He was and what was required to come to Him. Able believed in God and Able obeyed God. He HEARD that God required a sacrifice, he BELIEVED and by DOING what God commanded Able expressed his FAITH.
- The text says that “Able offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain.”
- God has nothing against farmers, and we know from Leviticus 19 that the fruits of the earth were brought to praise the Lord. But God has always required blood first. Blood was necessary to deal with sin. Other offerings were acceptable, but these offerings came after the sin or blood offering.
- Able acknowledged his sinfulness. Cain was disobedient and did not acknowledge his sin. Able brought “the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.” Able offered a life, he offered the blood and the very best to God. God prescribed this, and by faith Able obeyed.

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, “**through which he was commended as RIGHTEOUS**”,

- What right did Able have to be righteous? It is not that God likes meat and doesn't like tomatoes. No, God provided instruction of what was required, Able HEARD, Able BELIEVED, Able OBEYED, and he was commended or approved as righteous.
- Cain had the same information, and he did his own thing. Some may say in the tradition of his mother and father. Cain thought he could approach God in his own works. He could come to God in a way different than was prescribed by God. That is FALSE RELIGION. False religion that says, “I can come to God on my terms. There is not just one path to God, there are many paths that lead to God. If I do enough good works and live a clean life, I can come to God.” And Cain stands as all-time father of false religion.

Proverbs 16:25 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

- Did Cain believe in God? Yes, the fact that Cain brought his sacrifice is evidence that Cain believed in God. But Cain did not obey God's instructions. He came with the works of his own hands. In faith, Able believed in God, he obeyed God's instruction, his sacrifice was accepted by God, and he was commended as righteous.
- Verses 5 & 6 of Genesis add color to the story that I would have missed for not the commentary. It is worth sharing with you giving a very early look into the character of God through the failure of Cain.

Genesis 4:5-7 ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and **his face fell**. ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, “**Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?**” ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted?^[b] And **if you do not do well**, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for^[c] you, and you must rule over it.”

- Cain was “very angry, and **his face fell**. The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? Can you see the picture. Can you see the picture of your kids disappointment in themselves and their face has fallen? Do you know the feeling of failing someone who had high expectations for you and you can only drop your head and your face falls in shame and sorrow?”
- The Lord could have just blown off Cain and gone to good old Able’s side and congratulated him on his righteous choice. But no, God **GOES** to Cain. “**Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?**” The grace of God. The amazing grace of God. This is where we see the character of God. **God moves toward Cain** and says, “why are you so upset? We see again the evidence of God’s redemptive character. We saw it in the promise to Eve, that her offspring would overcome the deceiver and be victorious. And now we see it with Cain. Like the picture of the father of the prodigal son picking up his robe and running to his lost son, God moves toward Cain and asks him a question. “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” Other translations say, “If you do well, will *your face* not be ^[1]cheerful?” God is telling Cain he can get another chance. If you follow my instruction, you too will be accepted as righteous. The offer still stands for you Cain. That is a picture of God’s grace. A picture of the Character of God.
Genesis 4:7b: “And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, and you must rule over it.”
- If you disobey my instructions, sin will devour you. Beware you must turn from your sinful ways. – Cain rejected God. He didn’t want anything to do with changing his ways and obeying God.

Back to our Text:

Hebrews 11:4 ⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God

commending him by accepting his gifts. **And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.**

- **Genesis 4:8**, “Cain spoke to Abel his brother.^[d] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.” – Cain yielded to Satan.

John 8:44 affirms this saying, “Satan was a murderer from the beginning.”

- **Verses 9-10:** ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?” ¹⁰And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. – Cain has no remorse and responds sarcastically to God. And the Lord says, **The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.**” There is no place to hide from God.
- **Verses 11-12:** The Lord pronounces His judgment on Cain. ¹¹ And now **you are cursed from the ground**, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” - You prided yourself as a farmer. You will never grow one more thing as long as you shall live and you shall not have a place to call your home. Cain would never escape the evil one that was seeking to devour him.
- **Verses 13-16** ¹³ Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.^[e] ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went away from

the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod,^[1] east of Eden. – Even death would not bring him relief. Living was a greater punishment than death.

- Cain turned from the God of grace and spent the remainder of his life wandering the earth. Every footstep on the ground that Cain walked, his brother’s blood is crying out to God.
- Hebrews 11:4 says, “And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.” **What is his message? What is Able still saying to us today?**

1. Man comes to God by faith, not works.
2. There is only one way to come to God.
3. Sin is severely punished for the one who does not obey.

Let me conclude this section by taking us back to the exhortation given in **Hebrews 10:38-39**³⁸ but **my righteous one** shall live by **faith**, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”³⁹ But **we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.**

- Stand firm in your faith that preserves your soul.

We transition from Able’s right way of worship in verse 5 to Enoch’s walk with God in verses 5-6.

Hebrews 11:5-6 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 before he was taken up, he was attested to have been **pleasing to God**. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for the one who comes to God must

believe that He exists, and *that* He proves to be One who **rewards those who seek Him.**

- **Who was Enoch?** When Adam was 130, he fathered Seth. Enoch was in the family line of Seth.

Genesis 5:21-24 ²¹ Now Enoch lived sixty-five years, and fathered Methuselah. ²² Then Enoch **walked** with God three hundred years after he fathered Methuselah, and he fathered *other* sons and daughters. ²³ So all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; and he was ^[a]not, for God took him.

- By Faith Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he fathered Methuselah. Methuselah was the oldest recorded person in the Bible living to 969 and was the grandfather of Noah.
- **What do you think of when you think of “walking with God?”** My first thought was the Hymn, *In the Garden*. The chorus goes:

And He walks with me and He talks with me, And He tells me I am
His own, And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has
ever known.
- His walking with God was not physically walking, but implies an ongoing intimate relationship of communion. Enoch walked with God for 300 years!
- The Scripture tells us that Enoch pleased God. Why was Enoch pleasing to God? Verse 6 tells us, **“without faith it is impossible to please God.”** So, we know that Enoch had faith in God and his faith was pleasing to God. Verse 6 also tells us that Enoch **believed in God**. He had faith that God exists even though he did not see God. Verse 6 says, **“He rewards those who seek Him.”** Enoch sought out God. He called to God and sought to spend time with God. He did this for 300 years and the relationship was pleasing to God.

- Enoch and God were communing one day and God just took him home. We don't know the details other than the Scripture tells us God took him.
- **The key takeaway** from Enoch is that Enoch demonstrated that God is pleased when we have faith in Him. We express our faith in seeking Him, being obedient to Him, walking with Him, and communing with Him all of our lives.

We will close with Noah.

Hebrews 11:7 ⁷ **By faith Noah**, being warned *by God* about **things not yet seen**, ^[g]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**.

- I think it is safe to assume that we all know the story of Noah. What does the text specifically tell us about Noah that is important to our Scripture today?

Genesis 6:9 Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

- Other translations say that Noah was pleasing to God. We know from Hebrews 11:6 that faith pleases God. Noah was a righteous man who, like Enoch, walked with God and lived by faith in God.

As the story goes:

Genesis 6:13-21 ¹³And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh,^[c] for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴Make yourself an ark of gopher wood.^[d] Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. ¹⁵This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits,^[e] its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. ¹⁶Make a roof^[f] for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. ¹⁷For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all

flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. ²¹ Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them.” ²² Noah did this; **he did all that God commanded him.**

Hebrews 11:7 ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about **things not yet seen.**

- Prior to the creation of man Genesis 2:5-6 says that, “The LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist^[c] was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground. Noah believed in God’s warning in faith although he had not seen. He had not seen rain fall from the sky or a flood. But Noah was determined in his faith and in reverent fear he took action. He did all that God commanded him.

Genesis 6:8 ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

- When tested, Noah acted on his faith and was obedient to do all that God commanded him. Noah “became an **heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.**”
- Our instincts compel us to put our trust in what we see. We tend to give credibility to our circumstances and senses. What we see, hear, touch and feel. However, God speaks to us through Scripture. To place our faith or trust in Him though we may not see, pleases God. To revere God’s Word and to obey, we exercise faith in God and it is pleasing to God.

The Early Saints – Faith Pleases God

What is Able still saying to us today?

1. Man comes to God by faith, not works.
 2. Blood is required first to cover sins in order to come to God.
 3. Sin is severely punished for the one who does not obey.
- Enoch demonstrated that God is pleased when we have faith in Him. We express our faith in seeking Him, being obedient to Him, walking with Him, and communing with Him.
 - Noah had built an ark before he had ever seen rain. When we revere God's Word and obey, we exercise faith in God, and it is pleasing to God.

These are the first 3 examples give from creation demonstrating:

“faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”