

Chapter 11 does not focus on who Jesus is so much and the behavior of his believers. It gives us a definition of faith along with some illustrations of people living by faith. It is essential for the person who wishes to please God to believe that “God is” and that he will keep his promises which he made to those who obey his word.

In this chapter the faith which is pleasing to God is illustrated. It is the faith which believes in God, trusts in God, and obeys God. This faith can be seen in righteous men and women seeking an eternal abode in heaven. People today can have the eternal reward today by faith. It is by faith one understands God made the world. By faith Abel's sacrifice was acceptable while Cain's was not acceptable. By faith Enoch did not die, but was taken.

In the preceding chapter, the author introduces the teaching that the just shall live by faith (10:38). Righteous men and women of the Old Testament are used to illustrate this faith. Faith is the firm conviction that things which are unseen are real. Paul explains in Romans 10:17 that this conviction is based upon the word of God, not upon men's word or wishful thinking. So here we see the Biblical definition of faith. ***(1) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (2) For by it the elders obtained a good report.*** Just as our physical eyesight is the sense that gives us evidence of the material world, faith is the “sense” that gives us evidence of the invisible, spiritual world. Faith extends beyond what we learn from our senses, and the author is saying that it has its reasons. Its tests are not those of the senses, which yield uncertainty. It was faith of this kind that caused the men of old (elders) to receive God's approval. In verses 4-38 we see illustrations of this type of faith.

The writer begins his illustrations by addressing the creation (v3). The physical material world was created out of nothing by the word of God. How does one know this? Genesis 1:3 and Psalm 33:6, 9 affirm one knows this by faith. God spoke the world into existence. No man was there to see it; however, the word of God reveals how it happened. In this context, worlds mean the entire universe of space and time. From there he moves to earliest man.

***(4) By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*** Abel is the first example of faith given.

Abel's sacrifice was more acceptable than Cain's because of faith. The difference between the sacrifice of Cain and the sacrifice of Abel (Gen. 4:3-5) was not because one was animal, the other was vegetable. The difference was that Abel's sacrifice was made **by faith**. This means he believed God and obeyed him. He did that which was right in the sight of God. It seems that Cain's offering of vegetables was not his problem but rather his attitude in making that offering. Able's sacrifice was better because he was righteous-which equates to obedience; right doing. Though Abel is dead, he still speaks to men today by his faith and example.

**Enoch** is the next example of faith. *(5) By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.* Very little is known about Enoch. Enoch is one of the mystery men of the Old Testament being mentioned only in Gen.5:21-24 as the man who *walked with God and he was not, for God took him*. Jude 14 indicates he was a prophet. Enoch pleased God by walking with Him. This means he believed in God and obeyed Him. He did not die. He was **translated** by God. Only two men have been translated and did not die, Enoch and Elijah (2 Kings 2:17). Ordinarily men are to leave this earth by death (Hebrews 9:27). However, there are two exceptions. The important thing is Enoch pleased God by an obedient faith.

We have noted two men that pleased God by their obedience. This is a necessity to please God. *(6) But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* One cannot please God if he doesn't have faith that he is. The writer to the Hebrews doesn't say that it is *difficult* to please God without faith. He says that it is **impossible**. This is not faith in a god, but faith in the one true and living God who:

- created the world,
- gave men his word which tells man what God is like and what God wants men to do,
- who sent his Son to die for the sins of mankind.

Faith in God necessarily means to believe in him, trust him as a rewarder of those who seek after him and obey his will. There is a twofold command here; we must BELIEVE IN HIM plus we must believe that HE IS A REWARDER. God will reward those who seek him just as he did Enoch. Enoch had the type of faith that pleased God.

*(7) By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* Noah was warned of God that a flood was coming and he should prepare for it by building an ark. It was one hundred and twenty years before the flood came. Noah believed this and obeyed God (Genesis 6:22) even though it was still in the future. He built the ark. When the flood came, he and his family were saved in the ark. In obeying God, Noah condemned those who disobeyed God by his actions. Noah became the heir of righteousness which comes by an obeying faith. This illustrates verse 6 and teaches that faith is believing in God, trusting God and obeying God's will. Real faith will always do something. The book of James repeats this theme over and over again. Then there is Abraham – the father of the faithful.

*(8) By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. (9) By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:* Abraham was called of God to leave the Ur of the Chaldeans and go to a land that God would show him (Genesis 12-15). He obeyed God and went even though he did not know where God was leading him. This is rather amazing. From his possessions, it is apparent that Abraham was well-to-do in his home land and to give it all up to go to some unknown place took a tremendous amount of faith. As far as we know, he never saw his home-land and family again. His faith is mentioned in Genesis 15:6. In Genesis 26:5 his obedience is mentioned. Again, the faith which pleases God is the faith that believes God, trusts in God and obeys God.

Abraham lived as a sojourner in a land he did not own. He never owned any land in Canaan except the burial plot, the cave of Machpelah near Hebron. He lived as a nomad in tents as did Isaac and Jacob. He received the promise, but not

the possession of the land. He lived by faith looking for a better city and knowing that one day his descendants would own this land because God has promised it to him. Abraham was satisfied to live as a nomad because he looked for the heavenly city (v10). **The city which hath the foundations, whose building and maker is God** refers to heaven.

*(11) Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.* Back in Genesis 18, we learn that when Sarah overheard the promise from God, she laughed. She first laughed in unbelief and then she must have changed her mind and she learned to laugh in faith (Gen. 21:6). She was around ninety and did not have the capacity to have children; however, she believed God and the child was born.

*(12) Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.* When Abraham was almost one hundred and Sarah almost ninety, God renewed the promise. Abraham realized he did not have the power to beget and that Sarah did not have the power to conceive, yet God had promised them a child. Abraham believed God could fulfill what he had promised even when all the physical aspects of it cried out against it (Romans 4:18-21). God did fulfill His promise so that his descendants were "**many as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand, which is by the sea-shore, innumerable**" (Genesis 15:5; 22:17).

*(13) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (14) For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. (15) And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. (16) But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. These all died in faith* refer to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob. They had received the verbal promises, but not the actual

fulfillment of the promises; however, by faith they anticipated their fulfillment. They realized they were but strangers and pilgrims on earth. They were sojourners just passing through. This world was not their real home. There are spiritual promises involved as well, and through the eye of faith they saw these as well and anticipated them. Making a statement like this shows they did not consider Canaan their home. They were looking for a permanent place. Canaan was no more their home than the wilderness was the home of the Israelites during the forty years wandering in it.

If they had been thinking of Mesopotamia as their home to which they wished to return, they could have gone back at any time. Their thoughts were higher and greater than the Ur of the Chaldeans. They desired a better country than Canaan or Mesopotamia. They were looking for heaven. God was not ashamed to be called their God because of their faith and obedience to his will. The familiar name of the one true and living God in the Old Testament is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The city which God **hath prepared for them** is heaven.

Invitation: The same is true for the Christian. We are strangers and pilgrims looking for the promised future of heaven. Are you ready?