

7HEBREWS – LEVITICUS
“Hall of Faith”
Hebrews 11:1-6
September 24, 2023

Hebrews 11:1-6

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³By 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.

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.¹

“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”

We enter into perhaps the most popular and maybe the most preached chapter from the book of Hebrews. It has been called the Hall of Faith by some as we take a guided tour through the history of God’s people, led by the Holy Spirit-inspired writer.

Throughout history people have looked back at the biographies of their heroes. Whether it be politicians, kings and queens, athletes, business moguls, inventors, or other highly regarded people, there has always been an interest in those who seemingly have risen above circumstances, or maybe due to circumstances beyond their control, and were able to hold positions of influence.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 11:1–6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Yet here we have a guided tour introducing us to men and women of faith—those described in the annals of the Old Testament for centuries. Narratives that the readers of this book had heard over and over again many times. These are the children’s stories and epic retellings that likely many acted out as children.

But why?

Why go through this list? It is a full list, but not complete. And even in the list there are some that leave us scratching our head wondering why they are even listed.

It is full of flawed people. Those with criminal records. Some with suspect personalities. Even some that cause us to say, “Who is that and then we are Googling their name and Bible to see where the story is.”

And as we journey through this hall over the next few weeks, we will look back. We will define the characterizations. We will, to use a way overused term, “unpack” the narrative and see what God is saying to the people of the first century and what is being said to us today.

Ultimately, we will discover that the hall of faith is less about the faithfulness of God’s people and more about the faithfulness of God.

Chapter 11 has often been viewed as a disconnected portion of the letter. It is almost as if the author was preaching to the church, then took a breath and stated, “For example...” and began to simply state name after name of Old Testament heroes as an illustration. Yet the value of studying each chapter and verse in this book gives us clarity. For we saw earlier in this letter how the author encouraged the readers to imitate those who had come before.²

² Schriener, Thomas R. *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 338.

Hebrews 6:12

so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.³

Thus, today, we have three things to consider as we enter into the hall of faith:

1. FAITH IS A CONVICTION
2. FAITH PROVIDES A COMMENDATION
3. FAITH REVEALS CONFIDENCE

FAITH IS A CONVICTION

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.⁴

Faith is the **conviction** of things not seen. This eliminates the “I’ll believe it when I see it” crowd.

Yet, this simple definition clarifies so much. Faith, sold as a commodity by some who claim to be Christians, most especially those in the heretical prosperity gospel lane, leave many confused about what this biblical truth really is.

The word translated as “assurance” is one that is foundational. It is strong. It is translated assurance in most cases. In others we see it stated in English as “reality” or “confidence.” This is based on whether the translators view it as subjective or objective in nature. Nonetheless, it is clear what God is revealing to the Hebrews and thousands of years later, to us today.

Faith is a certainty.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 6:12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 11:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Faith is certain.

What is the big deal about that? Well, as Thom Scholz wrote about fifty years ago, it is clearly “More than a feeling.”

Some of you are theater folks and you have seen, or perhaps performed in the musical “Oklahoma!” Just saying that means that right now in your head songs are playing. Maybe you are hearing...

*O what a beautiful morning
O what a beautiful day
I've got a wonderful feeling
Everything's going my way!*

And that song along with a multitude of other songs, themes, framed statements, and an tidal wave of phrases tell us continually that how we feel is key.

Don't get me wrong, I like to feel good, positive, and happy.

But sometimes we define things as simply feelings that are more. In other words, faith is not a feeling. Faith is a certitude – a dynamic certainty about what God has promised.⁵

Faith is not the same as optimism. It is not the “just think positively” step. That is not faith and yet that is what is often believed. Faith is not sentimentality. Even when people say “You just gotta have faith” there is a sentiment that you just need to have faith in faith...and if you do, everything will be okay.⁶ What are we doing here? That type of teaching is just religious rhetoric that sounds biblical but leaves the person empty and reliant on self. YOU just have to have MORE! It's about YOU!

⁵ Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 288.

⁶ Hughes, 288.

But if that is the message, we are destined to everlasting failure. Why? Because more often than not I may “feel” faithless. So, we had better get this.

FAITH PROVIDES A COMMENDATION

Hebrews 11:2

² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ⁷

God tells us what faith is through the author and then reveals that this type of faith, this certain belief in God, in his nature, in his sovereignty over time and space, as creator, sustainer, and Lord is the faith that gave the long dead ancestors of the Hebrews receiving this letter their commendation.

In other words, it is this trusting in what was not yet seen or given that gave these saints favor before God.⁸

The believers and followers of God in the Old Testament, by faith, followed God’s laws, surrendered to his lordship, and looked forward to the promised Messiah who would come.

John 8:56

Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”⁹

Just as the saints in the New Testament and today, these before the incarnation put their faith in the certainty that God is the great I AM and saves his people.¹⁰

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 11:2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁸ Schriener, 338.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 8:56). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁰ GotQuestions.org. “Did Old Testament Believers Have Eternal Security?” *GotQuestions.Org*, 18 July 2018, www.gotquestions.org/Old-Testament-eternal-security.html.

These Old Testament saints were convinced that God's promises would not be unfulfilled.¹¹ What is unseen by these saints was not fully defined in the promises of what would come in the future, though that was part of the it, for the unseen also describes past realities, such as creation, or present realities, such as God's existence and his faithfulness.¹²

Hebrews 11:3

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.¹³

Thus, faith in God provides a commendation, a reward, favor as we see in the narrative accounts of Abel and Enoch.

FAITH REVEALS CONFIDENCE

The list of saints begins and at first glance it seems that we are encouraged to look at them and "be like them." To have the faith that Abel had, that Enoch had, that Noah, Abraham and all the others to come had.

That is encouraging. It is not really wrong.

But, it feels a bit like being the little brother and hearing your parents say "Why can't you be like your older brother or sister?"

Not the most encouraging word. Because even little brothers know their older siblings are not perfect, regardless how their parents may use that bit of challenge.

¹¹ Richardson, Christopher A. *Pioneer and Perfector of Faith: Jesus' Faith as the Climax of Israel's History in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (WUNT 2/338 Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 125-28.

¹² Attridge, Harold W. *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 311.

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 11:3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

So, clearly here the confidence to live as men and women of faith is not simply to “be like Moses, or Gideon, or David, or Rahab” or anyone else.

To be challenged to be like another image-bearer, especially when it comes to faith, leaves us with attempting to be a copy of a copy.

No, the focus is clear, our faith is secure, it is certain, it provides a commendation, and reveals confidence.

Confidence not in self – that is simply temporal cockiness.

Confidence in our God, our Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ.

So, you gotta have faith, right? But not the version often sold.

Hebrews 11:6

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.¹⁴

¹⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 11:6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.