

Lesson 13 Hebrews 11:1-7

1. This chapter is often dealt with as if it isn't part of the rest of the book...as only a lesson on faith. *However, this chapter is a continuation of the author's communication thus far. Remember that he has been encouraging the readers to receive the promise given to their fathers by believing in Jesus as their new High Priest and embracing His New Covenant.*
2. In previous chapters, he has given the poor examples of the Children of Israel in the wilderness who rebelled by refusing to believe God and enter the Promised Land and has implored them NOT to follow their example of unbelief. *Now, he gives excellent examples of those who believed God and accomplished many great things.*
3. He points out that these did not receive the promises. *This may sound a little confusing at first because they obviously did receive promises from God. The promise they did not receive are those the writer of Hebrews has been encouraging the readers to embrace and not let go...the promise of their Messiah, Jesus Christ, and His new covenant.*

VERSE 1¹

“Now faith is the assurance (KJV substance) of things hoped for, the conviction (KJV evidence) of things not seen.

1. “Now” has nothing to do with time. It could also be translated, “and”, “but”, or “moreover”.
2. “Faith” is “pistis” and means *persuasion*, that is, *credence*; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially *reliance* upon Christ for salvation; abstractly *constancy* in such profession; by extension the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself: - assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity.²
3. “Assurance” is “hupostasis” which is defined as a setting under (support), that is, (figuratively) concretely essence, or abstractly assurance (objectively or subjectively): - confidence, confident, person, substance.

The word "substance" deserves careful treatment. It is hupostasis, made up of stasis "to stand," and hupo "under," thus "that which stands under, a foundation." Thus it speaks of the ground on which one builds a hope. -WUEST

1 One may rightfully say, “Faith in God is the REASON we hope.”

4. “Hoped” is “elpizō” which comes from the word elpis which means (to anticipate, usually with pleasure); *expectation* (abstract or concrete) or *confidence*: - faith, hope.
5. “Conviction” is “elegchos” which is *proof*, *conviction*: - evidence, reproof and only used in this verse in the New Testament.

Moulton and Milligan report its use as a legal term. They say that it stands for "the whole body of documents bearing on the ownership of a person's property, deposited in archives,

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and forming the evidence of ownership." They suggest the translation, "**Faith is the title-deed of things hoped for.**"-WUEST

The word "evidence" is the translation of *elegchos* which means, "a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested." Thayer in commenting on its use here defines it as follows: "that by which invisible things are proved and we are convinced of their reality." His second definition of the word is "conviction."-WUEST

(11:1) The mention of a faith that is answered by salvation (10:39), leads the writer to speak about it now in detail. The word "faith" occurs without the article here, indicating that it is treated in its abstract conception, not particularly as new testament faith. Vincent says, "It is important that the preliminary definition be clearly understood, since the following examples illustrate it. The key is furnished by verse 27, as seeing him who is invisible. Faith apprehends as a real fact what is not revealed to the senses. It rests on that fact, acts upon it, and is upheld by it in the face of all that seems to contradict it. Faith is real seeing."-WUEST

6. The Amplified Bible³ translates verse 1 this way:

NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].

VERSE 2

For by it the men of old gained approval.

1. By what means did the men of old gain approval by God? By FAITH!
2. It is important when we read "by faith" we understand the implication that it is faith in God and His promise.
3. The author is cheering his readers on! In each example, he is saying, "Leave the Old. Don't look back. Embrace the New. FOLLOW THE EXAMPLES OF FAITH OF THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE YOU...those who only dreamed of what you now have!"
4. Chapter 11 should amaze us.
These people listed, who were NOT born again, who had NOT been forgiven forever, who did NOT have what we have, and did NOT know the continual abiding presence of the Holy Spirit within them, and yet still had enough confident faith in God that they boldly believed in the One who had promised and stepped out to receive strength and miracles from God.
5. "Gained approval" is an unfortunate translation of the text in the NASB. It more closely translates "obtained a good testimony" NKJV, "were commended" NIV, "obtained a good report" KJV.

*The words "obtained a good report" are the translation of *martureo* which means "to bear witness to." Here the verb is in the passive voice. Literally "for by it the elders were borne witness to." God bore witness to them that their faith gained victory for them over all obstacles.-Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament Volume 2.*

6. What then shall we, who have THE promises, accomplish by grace through faith?

³ Amplified Bible (AMP), Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation

VERSE 3

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

1. The author is continuing his explanation of faith. It is by faith that we understand creation.

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Psalms 19:1-4

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;

And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

² *Day to day pours forth speech,*

And night to night reveals knowledge.

³ *There is no speech, nor are there words;*

Their voice is not heard.

⁴ *Their line has gone out through all the earth,*

And their utterances to the end of the world.

(11:3) This verse does not begin the list of instances where faith was exercised in Old Testament times. It is still part of the exposition of faith found in verses 1-3. It shows that in its earliest and most general expression, belief that the visible universe was created by God, is a conviction of something not apprehensible by the senses. - Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament - Volume 2.

"Through faith we understand." Faith is the vehicle or medium of spiritual perception: "if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God" (John 11: 40); A.W. Pink

VERSE 4

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Genesis 4:3-4

So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. ⁴Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; ⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.

1. When reading the account in Genesis, one might wonder why one gift was accepted and the other rejected. Commentators ponder this topic extensively, some believing that the difference was that Abel's offering was a blood offering and Cain's was not. Others do not agree. Consider that even under the law there were sacrifices of blood and offerings of grain. Up to this account, there is no account of offerings of any kind being made (though some assert that surely Adam made offerings to the Lord). Why would God frown upon Cain's offering? It was what he had as well as Abel's offering was what he had. (One tilled the ground, and the other raised flocks.) Thankfully, the writer of Hebrews gives us the best clue into this mystery. Abel's sacrifice was offered in faith.

Much ingenuity has been wasted on this question, as though Cain erred on technical grounds; whereas we are expressly told in Hebrews 11:4 that Abel's was the more excellent

sacrifice, because offered “in faith.” It was the state of their hearts that made the difference. - Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers

There has been much speculation about why God respected Abel’s offering and rejected Cain’s. The reason most often given is that Abel’s offering was a blood offering, which symbolized Christ’s atonement. But I don’t think that was the problem at all. Offerings are supposed to come from what we have, not what we don’t have (2 Corinthians 8:12 - “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not”). Cain was a tiller of the ground. He brought what he had. Later, in the Law, people were commanded to bring an offering of their first fruits (Exodus 23:19 and 34:26). There was nothing wrong with his gift; it was his heart that was the problem. Hebrews 11:4 makes it clear that faith was the ingredient that made Abel’s offering better than Cain’s: “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.”-AWLC⁴

Many people have taught that it was the elements themselves that made Abel’s offering acceptable to God and Cain’s unacceptable. But this verse reveals that faith was the missing element of Cain’s sacrifice and the special ingredient of Abel’s offering. -AWLC

A more recent variation on these accounts sees the distinction in that Abel’s offering involved the shedding of blood, apart from which, as our author has said above, the law knows no forgiveness (Heb. 9:22).³⁷ But it is nowhere suggested in the Genesis narrative that it was a sin offering which the two brothers brought; it was in either case the appropriate presentation of the firstfruits of their increase. F.F. Bruce

VERSE 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 he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

- 1. Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam and part of Christ’s lineage, the father of Methuselah who holds the record for the longest living person recorded in Scripture to whom Enoch gave birth at age 65. Enoch lived another 300 years.**

Genesis 5:21

Enoch lived sixty-five years and became the father of Methuselah. ²² Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. ²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

- 2. Taking Hebrews 11.6 into consideration, Enoch’s faith in God is what pleased God.**

Faith was the ground of his pleasing God; and his pleasing God was the ground of his translation.- Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

- 3. We know very little about Enoch, but Jude reveals to us that he was a prophet who foretold of the wrath to come upon the ungodly, those who have spoken against Christ.**

Jude 1:14

It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all, and to

⁴ Andrew Wommack Living Commentary

convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

VERSE 6

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

1. **What this is also saying is that WITH FAITH it IS possible to please God.**
 - a. Believe that *He is*—that He exists.
 - To believe that “He is” is to believe that He, as God, IS ABLE to help you.
 - b. Believe that He **REWARDS** those who diligently seek Him.
 - To believe that “He rewards those who seek Him” is to believe that He, as a benevolent God, WILL help you.
2. **Every believer wants to please God.** Many get side tracked by the dooties and don’ties of Christianity and forget or perhaps never understand that we please God by simply believing in Him.
3. **What does it mean to seek Him?**
 - 1) Some translations insert the word “diligently”, but this word does not appear in the Greek. You will notice the NASB above does not include “diligently”. If you check older translations of this verse, it only says “seek”.
 - 2) The problem with using *only* the word “seek” is that it can be seen as simply looking for something.
 - 3) The problem with inserting the word “diligently” is that some people associate “diligence” with self-effort, not faith.
 - 4) The word in the Greek is (ekzēteō) and does not only mean to look for but to seek with the expectation of finding. This is probably why some translators chose to add “diligently”, even though it is not present—to convey that the seeker expects to find.

The idea is not merely that God exists as a rewarder, but that He will prove Himself to be a rewarder of that person who diligently seeks Him. As Vincent puts it: "He who approaches God has, through faith, the assurance that his seeking God will result in good to himself."-Wuest

- 5) Christians don’t seek God to find him. We already found Him. He lives inside of us.
- 6) To seek God does not mean to prove our love for God by fulfilling a long list of spiritual disciplines.
- 7) Hebrews 11 is full of examples of those who “sought” God. By looking at these examples and many others, we can form a better picture of what it means to seek God—to have faith.
 - a. **TO SEEK HIM IS TO SEEK HIM UNTIL THE ANSWER COMES AND NOT GIVE UP—The Unjust Judge**

Luke 18:1-8

*Then He spoke a parable to them, that **men always ought to pray and not lose heart**,² saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.³ Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’⁴ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself,*

*‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, ⁵ yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her **continual coming** she weary me.’”*

*⁶ Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷ And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? ⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, **will He really find faith on the earth?**”*

- 1) The parable has a purpose: we are to pray (which means to ask) and not give up.
- 2) The widow knew her rights and insisted upon them.
- 3) Even an unjust judge will give in to make her stop asking.
- 4) **How much more will the Just Judge, our Father, avenge us (yes, avenge us—make sure that what is right is done for us).**
- 5) It says that God avenges those who cry out to him day and night. This clearly lends itself to the idea of continuing to believe that He will answer.
- 6) He will answer speedily.
- 7) Then the haunting question: When He returns will he find faith on the earth? Faith pleases God. He wants us to have faith in Him—faith that He will return for us, faith that He is who He says He is, faith that He will do what He says He will do, AND faith that He will answer our prayers.

b. TO SEEK HIM IS TO KEEP ASKING, SEEKING, AND KNOCKING—The Persistent Friend
Luke 11: 5-13

*And He said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶ for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷ and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’? ⁸ I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, **yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.***

*⁹ “So I say to you, **ask**, and it will be given to you; **seek**, and you will find; **knock**, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ **For EVERYONE who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.***

c. TO SEEK HIM IS TO BELIEVE (HAVE FAITH) AND NOT DOUBT (NOT WAIVER, NOT BE TOSSED)—Speaking to Mountains, Asking for Wisdom, Whatever We Ask
Mark 11:23

*For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and **DOES NOT DOUBT IN HIS HEART**, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.*

James 1:5-8

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ **BUT LET HIM ASK IN FAITH, WITH NO DOUBTING**, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

1 John 5:14-15

*Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that **IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL**, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, **whatever we ask**, we **KNOW** that we **HAVE** the petitions that we have asked of Him.*

d. TO SEEK HIM IS TO PRAY WITH FAITH AND PATIENCE

It PLEASES GOD when we continue to believe—when we have faith in the face of opposition. We can KNOW that He REWARDS those who diligently seek Him. We inherit the promises by faith and patience. Patience has to do with endurance. Don’t give up. Don’t faint.

Hebrews 6:11-12

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² that you do not become sluggish⁵, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

e. TO SEEK HIM MEANS TO LIVE IN THANKSGIVING AFTER WE HAVE ASKED**Philippians 4:6-7**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 4:2

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it (watch over them) with thanksgiving

f. OTHER EXAMPLES OF SEEKING HIM

1. The man whose friends took off a roof and lowered him down so that Jesus could heal him.
2. The woman who pushed through the crowd to touch the hem of His garment.
3. The blind men who kept crying out for Jesus to heal them.
4. The persistent Canaanite woman who begged Him to deliver her child and kept asking until he did.

Matthew 15:21-28

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

²³ But He answered her not a word.

*And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."
²⁴ But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

²⁵ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"

²⁶ But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

²⁷ And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

*²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, "**O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.**" And her daughter was healed from that very hour.*

VERSE 7

By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, 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.

1. We have many clues into the life of Noah.

He also was in the Messianic lineage (as was Enoch). He was a just man. He was perfect in His generations. He walked with God. When the whole earth was found by God to be only evil continually, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God saw Noah's faith in Him which had resulted in Him walking with God.

Genesis 6:5-9

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on

⁵ Sluggish: *nōthros*, *sluggish*, that is, (literally) *lazy*, or (figuratively) *stupid*: - dull, slothful.

the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. ⁹This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.

2. This same faith that Noah had in God caused Noah to believe God and fulfill his calling.

In Genesis the warning of God was given Noah because he was righteous. In Hebrews we are told that Noah wrought righteousness in his life by faith. -Wuest

Wuest Translation: By faith Noah having been warned concerning things not seen, with reverential care prepared an ark to save his household; by means of which (faith) he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

3. The name Noah means "rest" in Hebrew. So, righteousness and grace, the great foundations of the New Covenant are first pictured in Noah, "rest". As we believe/rest in the finished work of Jesus, we rest in His righteousness being our righteousness, and we rest in His Grace and Favor being abundant towards us.