

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church**  
**The Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 11, Verses 1-12**  
**Notes From Class on February 23, 2010**  
**Last Revised on (February 26, 2010)**

Good evening everyone!

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Welcome to our continuing study of the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

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Tonight you will need a Bible and a song book.

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If you are using an English translation of the Bible other than the English Standard Version ("ESV") then you may also wish to have the handout we have prepared, which has the ESV text of Hebrews,

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There is coffee and tea a the back.

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Please get what you want and, then, let's get started.

### **Introduction**

In this class, as you know, we are studying the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

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Thus far we have completed the first **10** Chapter.

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Tonight we will start reading Chapter **11**.

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But first let's begin, as usual, with a quick review of what we have studied so far.

### **Review**

As we have continually noted,

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Hebrews appears to be the text of a **sermon**,

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written around the end of the **First Century**, A.D,

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to be delivered to a group of **Christians**

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at least some of whom were in danger of "**falling away**"

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and needed to be encouraged to "**hold fast.**"

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The preacher reminds them of the **unqualified** supremacy of Christ **(1:1 - 3:6)**.

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He considers the history of Israel and urges his listeners not repeat the same mistakes **(3:7 - 4:13)**.

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The preacher introduces the idea that Jesus is like our great **high priest**. (4:14 - 5:10)

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To reject Jesus is to reject **all** hope of salvation. (5:11 - 6:20)

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The **priesthood** and the **law** have been replaced by something better (7:1 - 8:7).

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The **Old** Covenant has been replaced by a New Covenant (8:8-8:13).

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All of the **ceremonies** and rituals of the Old Covenant are obsolete. (Chapter 9)

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The death of Christ has **atoned** for sin --- once and for all --- (Chapter 10:1-18)

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So that we may draw near to God with **confidence**, if that is what we truly desire (Chapter 10:19-22)

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**God** is faithful, so must **we** be.

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We must continue **meeting** together, the preacher tells them,

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and we must continue **loving** and **helping** one another, and we must **stop** sinning.

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The proof that we **belong** to God is that we do **not** fall away or shrink back.

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If we **persevere** until the end, our souls shall be **preserved**.

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**Destruction** awaits those who fall away from Christ.

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This is a quick review of what we have studied to the end of Chapter 10.

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Before we read on, are there any questions or comments?

### **Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verse 1**

Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 11, Verse 1, in **Japanese**.

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Thank you. Now would someone please read that same verses in **English** (ESV).

**(Verse 1)**

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

Thank you.

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As we have discussed before in this class, the chapter divisions and verse numbers in the Bible are **not** part of the inspired text, but were added later by scholars, for the **convenience** of those who study the text.

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 Usually those divisions seem well placed and really **helpful**.

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 Here however the division of the text between Chapter 10 and 11 is **potentially** misleading.

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 Chapter 11 begins: "Now faith is ..."

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 It seems almost as if the author is going to give us a **definition** of "faith."

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 And sometimes when you ask a group of Christians for a definition of the word "**faith**" someone will remember this first verse of the 11th Chapter of Hebrews and give it as the definition...

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

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 But this would not be a very **good** definition,

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 and that is **not** what the preacher is doing here.

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 Here, in verse 1 of Chapter 11, the author is **continuing** the thought begun at the end of Chapter 10.

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 Let us step back and remember...

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 In Chapter 10, Verses 32-34, the preacher helps his listeners to recall how **they** were in former days, soon after they had become Christians.

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 Despite their problems and suffering of various kinds, they had persisted in being **obedient** to God, because they had **trusted** Him to provide a better future.

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 In Verses 35 and 36 of Chapter 10, he urges them not to **lose**, this confidence in God,

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 because they must **endure** if they wish to receive what is **promised**, that is **life** eternal.

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 Then in Verses 37 and 38 he quotes from the prophet Habbakuk, the words of God saying, my righteous one shall live by **faith**, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

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 He then reassures his listeners that we are **not** of those who shrink back and are destroyed,

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 but of those who **have** faith and preserve their souls.

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 That is the last phrase of Chapter 10 and the word **faith** is there being used by the preacher in the same way as it was spoken by **God** through the prophet **Habakkuk**.

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 The major premise seems to be that, among God's righteous ones, faith manifests itself as **endurance**

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 through continuing **trust** and **obedience** despite great difficulties.

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Conversely a lack of endurance, a falling away, indicate an absence of faith.

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 Faith and endurance go hand in hand.

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 This is the major premise being advanced in the latter part of Chapter **10**.

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 Now the first verse of Chapter 11 making a related point,

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 a point that was already made back in Chapter 10, Verse 34

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 namely that faith waits patiently, and endures hardship, because it looks forward to the future

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 in confident expectation of things that God will do

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 things which God has promised but not yet given.

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Faith in other words is what we have been given now, in place of what has been promised later

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 Faith is itself proof (manifest as obedience, trust, endurance and etc.) of things which cannot yet be seen.

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 That our eternal salvation comes through such faith is nothing new, the author intends to show.

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 It has always been that way.

### Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 2-4

Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 11, Verses 2-4, in Japanese.

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 Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

**2 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.**

**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.**

Thank you.

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In what has gone before (i.e. that last part of Chapter 10 and the first verse of Chapter 11) we have understood the importance, for God's people, of looking forward confidently for things yet unseen.

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Now in Verse 2 we read:

**(Verse 2)**

**For by it the people of old received their commendation.**

"It" is the "**faith**" we have been discussing.

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Here the preacher wants to make it clear that God's people have **always** been saved through such "faith"

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This is how God's people have always been **recognized**. That is what **makes** them God's people.

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They **persevere** amazingly and move forward **hopefully** toward that which has been promised and **cannot** be seen.

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This, then, is basically the theme of all of Chapter 11, which the preacher illustrates with Biblical examples.

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He begins in Verse 3 with an example which applies to men of all times.

**(Verse 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.**

People of faith have always understood that God **created** our universe, and that He **transcends** it.

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Those who believe **otherwise** have no hope of eternal life, no hope of **anything** beyond what they can see!

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But not all who admit the **existence** of God have perceived him correctly and honored Him as they should.

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Thus, in Verse 4, we are reminded of the story of **Cain and Abel**

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Most of you will remember this story, which we read in **Genesis**, Chapter **4**.

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But some of you may **not** remember, so I think it would be good for us to read it now.

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Will somebody please read Genesis, Chapter 4, Verses 1-11, in Japanese.

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Thank you. Now will someone please read those same verses in English (ESV)

**(Genesis 4:1-11)**

**Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten 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? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." 8 Cain spoke to Abel his brother. 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.**

Here we have two brothers, each making an offering to God.

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The offering of one brother, that of Abel, was **pleasing** to God.

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The offering of the other brother, that of Cain, was **not** pleasing to God.

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So Cain became very **angry**

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and despite some advice and encouragement from God himself,

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Cain **killed** Abel and, then, confronted by God, sought to **deny** what he had done.

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So God **avenged** the blood of Abel, which is described as crying out to him from the ground.

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So much for the story of Cain and Abel.

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Does anyone have any comment or questions before we return to Hebrews?

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O.K. then. Hebrews, Verse 4 reads:

**(Verse 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.**

Here the author of Hebrews teaches that the **difference** between Cain and Able was **not** the outward difference in the type of sacrifices that the two had offered, but a difference in their **inward** disposition.

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They both believed in the **existence** of God.

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Both offered sacrifices to God.

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But through the events which transpired, it became clear that Cain did not really **know** who God was.

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He neither **obeyed** God nor **trusted** Him.

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He was not, in short, a man of **faith**.

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From the story we may also deduce that Able **was** a man of faith.

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because God, who sees the heart, **commended** Abel's gift.

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We should learn from this that God never cares about what we do **outwardly** except insofar as it is a manifestation of what is true **inwardly**.

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Only "**works of faith**" can please God, and he is the author of them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

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It is not possible to **achieve** righteousness **through** works.

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This is a **consistent** teaching of the **whole** Bible!

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Questions about Cain and Abel?

### **Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 5-6**

OK. Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 11, Verses **5-6**, in **Japanese**.

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Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

**5 By 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.**

**6 And 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.**

Thank you.

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Do you all know about Enoch?

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We read about him very briefly in Genesis 5:21-24

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Let's do go ahead and read that.

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Would someone please read Genesis 5:21-24 in Japanese.

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Thanks. Would someone please read that same passage in English.

**(Genesis 5:21-24)**

**When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. 22 Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. 24 Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.**

Well, there are all kinds of things that are interesting about Enoch.

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One of these is that **Enoch**, like the Prophet **Elijah**, did not **die** in the normal way.

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It is said of everyone else in the Bible that they died.

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But in case of these two worthies, it is said that God "**took them.**"

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**Much** is known about Elijah.

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He had his good days and his bad days, but he certainly comes across as a great man of **faith**.

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Less is known about **Enoch**, but it does say in Genesis 5:24 that he "**walked with God.**"

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It is this **combination** of things which the author of Hebrews summarizes in Verse 5 of Chapter 11.

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We read:

**(Verse 5)**



**By 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.**

Enoch's "walk with God" so **pleased** God that he spared Enoch the **experience** of death.

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This marks him as a great man of **faith**.

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No great worldly **accomplishment** is attributed to him.

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Other men of great accomplishment (Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon) all **died!**

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So what happened with Enoch is a good example for the sermon that is being preached here.

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It is **faith** that gets you safely home. **Not** works.

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That leads into Verse 6, which reads:

**(Verse 6)**

**And 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.**

As we have been saying, and as the whole Bible is teaching, it is **impossible** to please God with our good works, except insofar as they attend a heart that is truly faithful.

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Think about it. God does not **need** our works or anything that we have.

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What God **wants** is **us!**

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There can be no question of us having any power to **resist** him.

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But what he intends is for us to draw near to Him **willingly**.

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This means that we must know that he **exists**.

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meaning not just **any** God we might imagine, but the one **true** God: righteous and holy

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and for us to be willing to approach the one true God, we must believe that he is **kindly disposed** toward **us**

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like a **father** toward his **children**.

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This is part of what it **means** to have faith.

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**Knowledge** of God is not enough until **trust** is added.

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And this **trust** includes our assurance that our almighty heavenly father will never let us die!

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Which brings us to the story of **Noah**.

### **Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verse 7**

OK. Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 11, Verse **7**, in **Japanese**.

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Thank you. Now would someone please read that same verse in English (ESV).

**7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.**

Thank you.

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We do **not** know much about **how** God "took" Enoch out of this world.

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But we **do** know a great deal about how God saved **Noah** and his family, and through them the entire human race, out of the **Great Flood**.

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I think this story is well enough known that we will not try to read it.

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We know that Noah lived at a time when the entire world was consumed in **wickedness**, and had turned their backs on God.

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But not **Noah**.

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God warned him of a coming flood.

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He **heard** God and **believed** him.

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He **obeyed** God and built the ark as God had instructed.

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His belief apparently produced reverent **fear**.

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That is entirely **appropriate**. What God had told him was certainly **fearful!**

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*(n.b. even Jesus seemed afraid in the Garden of Gethsemane)*

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But Noah **persevered**, trusting that God would not let he and his family die.

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He endured much hardship and ridicule for a very long time.

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The second sentence of Verse 7 says, "by this he **condemned** the world."

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I think the author of Hebrews means to say that because Noah **did** persevere through all of this, it was clearly demonstrated how much the rest of the world deserved the destruction that came upon it.

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This also demonstrates how far Noah was (as it says) "an heir of the **righteousness** that comes by **faith**."

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In other words, **Noah's** faith is set in sharp relief against the **lack** of faith in the whole world.

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The whole world perished because of its **lack** of faith.

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Because of **his** faith, Noah obeyed and trusted God, thus he and his descendants were saved.

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Notice again that **obedience** and **trust** are outward signs of the faith we are given.

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Conversely when we are **disobedient** and **mistrustful** of God, this bespeaks a lack of faith.

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Which brings us to the wonderful example of the **patriarchs**.

### **Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verses 8-12**

OK. Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 11, Verses **8-12**, in **Japanese**.

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Thank you. Now would someone please read that same verse in English (ESV).

**8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.**

**9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.**

**10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.**

**11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.**

**12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.**

Thank you.

**(Verse 8)**

**By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.**

Old Testament scripture has a **lot** to say about Noah.

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It has even **more** to say about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the sons of Jacob --- that is the **patriarchs** of the Nation of Israel.

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This all began when **Abraham**, who was living in Mesopotamia at the time, was called by God to go to a place that God would show him.

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Abraham went **immediately**, without **question**, and without any **idea** of where he was going.

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And he took his whole **household** with him.

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Just as the "taking" of Enoch implies much about the faith that Enoch had been given,

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so Abraham's abrupt departure from Mesopotamia implies much about the faith Abraham had been given.

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It was never about **who** Abraham was or what Abraham **did** in his own right or by his own power.

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From the beginning, it was about **his "walk with God"** ... his **responsiveness** to the voice of God.

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These bespeak a great **endowment** of faith in the man.

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Verse 9 says that

**(Verse 9)**

**By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.**

The preacher is **summarizing** a lot of history but he makes the point he needs to make.

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Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all lived out much of their lives (Isaac all of his) in the Land of **Canaan**,

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also known as the **Promised Land**, because God had promised that their descendants would **occupy** it.

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But **none** of the patriarchs **ever** took possession of that land or any portion thereof, except enough to be buried in it.

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To them the Land of Canaan was like a **foreign** land.

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And not just because they had left their home in Mesopotamia.

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They could have picked up their tents and returned home to Mesopotamia at any time or later remained in their new Egyptian home, or gone and made a home in some other place.

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But they weren't just looking for **some** place on earth to settle.

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Verse 10 says that

**(Verse 10)**

**For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.**

I think the preacher means to say that Abraham was **not** looking forward to any ordinary **earthly** city, neither Jerusalem or some other.

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Rather he had understood the promises of God in their **larger** context.

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Abraham was looking **forward** to the city built by God, the heavenly Jerusalem, blessed eternal life

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If he were **not** looking that far up and forward, it is impossible to understand what Abraham was doing!

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It just would have made no sense for he and his descendants to wait around for several centuries to occupy a tiny little piece of land in modern day Palestine.

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With his eyes of faith, Abraham saw a **whole** lot more than that!

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And why **not**! Just look at all of the wonderful things God had done in Abraham's sight.

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Verse 11 reminds us of the impossible birth of Isaac

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We read:

**(Verse 11)**

**By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.**

We remember that Abraham's wife, **Sarah**, had consistently tried and failed to conceive a child

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Then when she was a very old woman, well past child bearing years, and Abraham even older, an angel told her that she would give birth to a son, **Isaac**.

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Sarah's first reaction: she **laughed**. That is what her name means.

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But even this Sarah, who first laughed, was later given **faith** sufficient to believe God's promise and conceive.

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And surely this lifted her eyes and the eyes of her husband Abraham even higher, to a very great expectation of what God would accomplish through Isaac and beyond.

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Verse 12 reads

**(Verse 12)**

**Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.**

And all of this was just as God had **promised**.

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Furthermore God had promised that **all** the nations of the world would be blessed through Abraham's **seed**, from which we understand **Christ** and the **salvation** of all who ever have been and ever shall be saved.

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All of this worked through the **faith** that had been given to Abraham, as we now know from where we stand in history.

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But **all** of these people of whom the preacher has spoken: left this world before **any** of these things had happened.

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That is the sense of our next reading

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***(n.b. This is where we ran out of time on February 23)***

### **Closing Prayer**

Most gracious heavenly father,

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I pray that you would give us faith.

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Faith that hears your word and believes it.

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Faith that is moved to reverent fear.

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Faith that obeys immediately and without question.

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Faith that trusts in your Fatherly love and great goodness.

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Faith that looks upward to heaven and forward to the new creation.

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and away from this world, where we are strangers and wanderers.

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Please give us faith, O Lord

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and preserve our soul.

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In Jesus name.

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Amen