

# (Through the Bible) Hebrews 11

by Chuck Smith

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*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, and it is through faith that we please God.*

**Duration:** 1:15:58

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:1-2, Genesis 22:1-2, Acts 8:26-27, Hebrews 11:5

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Gods Sovereignty"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses how God often leads us one step at a time, which can be challenging for us. He uses the examples of Abraham and Philip to illustrate this point. Abraham was told by God to leave his land without knowing where he was going, while Philip was commanded to leave a successful revival and go to a desert place. The speaker emphasizes that we were created for God's pleasure and that the material world we see is made up of invisible atoms. He concludes by highlighting the power of faith and how it is through faith that the elders obtained a good report.

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## Transcript

Hebrews chapter 11. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. This is not so much a definition of faith as it is the declaration of what faith does.

It is the substance of things that are hoped for. The word substance there has been translated in the new versions, the substantiating of the things that we hope for. And the evidence, and that word has been translated conviction of the things not seen.

I'm convicted of truths. Though I may not have seen them, I'm convicted of their existence. There is evidence for the existence of God, causes me to believe in God.

Though I have never seen God, the evidence of his existence creates that faith in my heart. As we pointed out this morning, there are many things we believe in that we don't and haven't seen. We believe in the wind, though we haven't seen the wind.

We see the effects of the wind. We see the trees that are bowing in its force. We see the leaves that are blowing.

We see the dust that is being carried. You see the evidence of it. You can feel it.

And we say, oh, that's a cold biting wind. Or we say, oh, that's one of those warm Santanas, and you feel the wind. You see the evidence of it.

And thus we believe in the wind, though we don't actually see the wind itself. Magnetic force, I believe in it. I've never seen it.

I see its effect as I bring opposite poles together and I watch them attract. And so I believe in the magnetic powers or the magnetic force, but I have never seen it. I see evidence of it.

I see evidence of God. I feel the presence of God. I feel the power of God.

I feel the love of God. And I see the evidence of God's existence. And thus faith, I believe in the existence of God, though I've never seen God, yet I do not doubt his existence because of the evidence that is all around faith, the substantiating of the things that are hoped for the evidence of things not seen for by it that is by faith, the elders obtained a good report.

Now here is evidence of what men have wrought by faith. And as he starts to, well, before he gets into it, he starts with just the creation of the world itself through faith. We understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things which are seen were not made of things, which do appear interesting statement, especially from a scientific standpoint.

The Bible said that God said, let there be light. God said, let the waters above the firmament be divided from the waters beneath the firmament. God said, let the earth bring forth herb yielding seed after its kind God said.

And so we believe that God spoke the scene world into existence so that the things which we do see were made out of things which do not appear an example, really a faith or an evidence of faith, substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen. So God took unseen things and made the material scene universe in which we live the world. Now, looking at that a little more closely, God made the world out of things that do not appear.

We know that the universe, the worlds are made up of atoms which are invisible. We know they exist, but yet they are invisible so that all of the material things that we see are made up of things that cannot be seen of atoms, protons, electrons. And so by faith, we believe that the worlds were formed by the word of God so that the things which we do see, the things which are appear are made out of things which cannot be seen or do not appear.

Fascinating statement. And now he begins to list those men of faith from the old Testament and he lists them in chronological order. As far as their appearances in the Bible until you get to David and Samuel, and only there does he reverse the chronological order.

So the first to appear in the scene of faith was Abel. And 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 speaks.

In other words, the example speaks to us today of Abel who offered his sacrifice to God through faith. And it was because of his faith that he was declared by God to be righteous. Now there's been a lot made over the sacrifices of Cain and Abel.

How that Cain being a farmer brought the fruit of the ground unto the Lord. Probably brought some of his produce that he had cultivated. Whereas Abel being a husbandman brought a lamb unto God as a sacrifice.

And when they offered their sacrifices unto the Lord, the Lord accepted Abel's sacrifice, but he rejected Cain's. Now, just how this was demonstrated, we do not know. But when Cain saw that his offering was rejected and Abel's was accepted, he was angry with the Lord for rejecting his offering.

And the Lord said unto him, why are you angry that your offering was rejected? If it was rejected, it was because sin lies at your door. And declaring basically that if it were offered properly, it would have been accepted if his heart was right. There has been a lot made over the fact that one was a blood sacrifice and the other was not a blood sacrifice, but a offering of the fruit of the ground.

And many have suggested that that is the reason why God accepted Abel's because he offered a blood sacrifice and rejected Cain's because it was really the product of the works of his own hands that he brought to the Lord. And a lot has been made over that. But in the commentary here in Hebrews, it tells us the reason why one was rejected and the other was accepted is one was offered in faith and the other was offered not with faith, just the works of man's hands.

Now, there are those today who offer in faith and there are those today who offer works for righteousness. There are those who seek to be righteous by their faith in the Lord, those who seek to be righteous by their works. The interesting thing to me is that when God inaugurated the sacrifices and all through Moses, there was the meal offering, which was acceptable to God.

It was the bringing in of the grain that you had grown, grinding it into flour, making little cakes and baking them and offering them unto the Lord as a peace offering unto God. Or it was actually the burnt offering, the sack, the an offering that indicated the consecration of my service unto God, the meal offering, it was called so that it was an offering that was perfectly legitimate, an offering that expressed sort of a communion with God, as did the peace offering. But here he was seeking communion with God when sin was in his heart.

God said, first deal with the sin. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, said that if a man comes to the altar and realizes that his brother has ought against him, he ought to first go to his brother and reconcile their differences and then come and offer your gift unto the Lord. Many times a person is trying to shortcut himself into fellowship with God.

Not first of all, realizing that it is sin that has alienated me from God. And before I can really have any kind of communion or fellowship with God, the sin issue must be dealt with. That was Abel's failure to deal with the sin issue.

And God put the finger on it. He said, if your offering is rejected, it's because sin is at the door of your tent. Take care of that first and then come and offer your gift unto the Lord.

And so one Abel offered in faith and was accepted, testimony of his righteousness. And early in the history, then God is testifying of righteousness through faith. 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. What a great testimony. Here's a man that declares he pleased God.

That's the very purpose of our existence, to bring pleasure to God. In the fifth chapter of the book of Revelation, in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, where John sees the cherubim about the throne of God, worshipping the Lord, declaring the holiness and the eternal character of God. The twenty-four elders fall on their faces before the throne.

They take their crowns and cast them on the glassy sea, and they say, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor. For you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created. A basic fact of your existence.

You were created for God's pleasure. A person who lives for their own pleasure is living out of sync with God. And it is interesting how that a person living for their own pleasure is constantly pursuing pleasure, constantly trying to find something new, something different, some new sensation.

Enoch had the testimony that he pleased God. Now we are told for without faith it is impossible to please God. So the witness of faith.

It was through faith that Abel was declared righteous by the Lord and accepted by God. Through faith, Enoch as he walked with God was translated that he should not see death. But before then, he had this witness.

He pleased God. And how did he please God? Through his faith. For without faith it is impossible to please God.

For he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. So you first of all have to believe in the existence of God, but then you have to believe that God is good. God rewards those who diligently seek him.

The next example is that of Noah. By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet. Faith the substance of things, hope for the evidence of things not seen.

Up until the time of Noah, it had never rained upon the earth. The earth was watered by a mist that came up out of the ground every evening. There was no doubt a very heavy moisture blanket around the earth as God divided the waters above the firmament from the waters beneath the firmament.

And this heavy water blanket in the atmosphere no doubt accounted for the discoveries in the geological stratas of ferns, asparagus ferns, 60, 70 feet tall. Probably accounted for the longevity of life, average 900 years or so. For the moisture blanket shielding the earth from much of the cosmic radiation, which causes the mutations in the cells and the breakdown and the aging process.

And so the period of the antediluvians with a long life, with the tremendous growth of plants and trees, they had never seen rain before. But God said that he was going to cause it to rain upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights. Noah tried to warn the people of the impending flood that was going to come and they mocked him.

For a hundred years he was building this giant ship out in an area that had never known rain. Preacher of righteousness, by faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with reverence. He 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.

Again, the whole idea here in the chapter is that it is through faith that a person is accounted righteous before God. It is believing in God that is the most important, not my works. They follow.

Works will logically, automatically follow my faith. But works cannot produce faith, nor can they substitute for faith. Faith does work.

I cannot say, well, I believe this with all of my heart without my life conforming to what I believe. There's got to be that conformity, but faith has to come first. My faith in God provokes my works for God.

Now, Noah condemned the world by his belief and faith in God and he became the heir of the righteousness, which is by faith. By faith, Abraham and Sarah. By faith, Abraham, first of all, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed.

And he went out not knowing where he was going. God first said to Abraham, get out of this place, out of the land of your fathers and go unto a land that I will show you. Now, oftentimes, as God is leading us, he leads us just one step at a time and that's our problem.

I don't like being led one step at a time. If he tells me to get out, I want him to tell me where to go. I like two steps or three or four.

I like him to spell out the whole thing. Maybe I don't want to do what he's got in mind when we get down the road. God said to Philip, the Holy Spirit said to Philip in Samaria, go down to the Gaza, that desert area.

That's all. Here he's in the midst of a great revival. Many Samaritans are believing, being baptized, being filled with the Holy Spirit.

And the Lord commands him to leave this marvelous move of the Spirit and go down to this desert place, go down to Gaza. And so Philip went. Of course, he had two steps.

The Lord said, go. And he said, where to Gaza? Abraham only had one. The Lord said, go get out of the land.

And so Abraham began to journey, not knowing where he was going. Hey, where are you? Go ahead, fella. I don't know.

I mean, you're moving your whole family and you don't know where you're going. Yeah. Well, if you don't know where you're going, how are you going to know when you get there? Oh, he'll tell me.

So by faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed. And he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith, he sojourned in the land of promise.

As in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. So here, when he came to the land and he stood on Bethel, center of the land, good vantage point, God said, look to the north, the east, the south and the west. Far as you can see, Abraham, I've given you this land and to your seed forever.

It's yours. And so he journeyed through the land. He went down to Hebron, back up to the area of Shechem.

But he was as a stranger in a pilgrim there. He lived in tents. He didn't build any cities.

He didn't build any homes. He just lived in tents, though the whole land was his by the promise of God. Yet he dwelt in it as a stranger, for he was looking for the eternal city of God, a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

So through faith, Sarah herself received strength to conceive and was delivered of a child when she was past age because she judged him faithful who had promised. Now, as we read these people of great faith and we see that they made their mark in history because of their faith and Sarah comes on the scene and her faith is spoken of that in her old age, she was plus 90, had never had a child, and yet she received strength to conceive seed and bore the son, though she was past age, because she judged him faithful. You remember, though, that Sarah's faith wasn't always so perfect.

I think that a lot of times as we read of these people of faith, we sort of think them out of our category. They're sort of super saints, and I can never attain to that. But when the Lord was talking to Abraham concerning his son that he was going to give to him, Abraham said, Oh, Lord, let Ishmael live before thee.

And the Lord said, I will bless Ishmael and make of him a nation. But Sarah is going to bear a child and through Sarah shall thy seed be called. Well, she was eavesdropping over in the tent, listening to what the Lord was saying to Abraham.

And when the Lord said to him, through Sarah shall your seed be called, she started laughing. I mean, that's incredulous. And so the angel Lord said, Why did Sarah laugh? And she said, Well, I wasn't laughing, but it was significant when the child was born, they named him laughter.

Isaac, which means laughter, because they laughed at how incredulous it seemed that Sarah should conceive in her old age and bear a son. Therefore, there sprang even of one and him as good as dead. So many as the stars in the sky and multitude in the sand, which is by the seashore innumerable.

So there sprung forth from Abraham an innumerable host of people. These all died in faith. Wait a minute.

Are you supposed to die in faith? I thought if you had enough faith, you wouldn't die. Just have enough faith. You'll never be sick.

Just have enough faith. You can drive any kind of car you want, live in any kind of a home you want. If you just have enough faith.

Now, these all died in faith. The faith message had not reached them yet. These all died in faith, not having received the promise of the promises that is the promises of the Messiah that God had given to them.

They believed in God's salvation that he promised that he would provide. They all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, they were persuaded of them and they held on to them, embraced them, and they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. And so they had the proper attitude towards the world, the proper perspective of life.

I'm only a stranger in a pilgrim here. I'm satisfied to dwell in a tent. This isn't my home.

I'm passing through. I'm just a transient here. I'm looking for my permanent home.

I'm looking for my dwelling with God in his eternal kingdom. And so they saw the promises. They were given the promises of the kingdom of God.

Abraham looked for that city which had foundation, whose maker and builder was God. He was looking for the kingdom of God and confessing that I'm not permanent here. I'm just passing through.

I'm a stranger in a pilgrim to this earth. I belong to the heavenly kingdom. I'm a citizen of that heavenly kingdom.

And so they saw the promises. They were persuaded of the truth of the promises. They embraced or held on to the promises and they made their confession of I'm just a stranger in a pilgrim here.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they are seeking for a country. Now, truly, if they had been mindful of that country from once they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. When he came to Haran, he could have turned around and gone back into Babylon.

Can always turn back, but they journeyed on in obedience to God. Now they desire a better country that is a heavenly. Wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared for them a city.

This is interesting. God is not ashamed to be called their God. It may indicate that God is ashamed that some people call him God and the way that people act.

I wouldn't blame him. I pray that I'll never be an embarrassment to God. I'm afraid I have been.

I'm afraid that I have done things that embarrassed God in a sense that, you know, people said, oh, well, you know, he's a minister of God and God was sort of ashamed that I should be so identified now by faith. Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac and he that had received the promise offered up his only begotten son of whom it was said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead from whence he also received him in a figure.

And here is some outstanding insight on the story of Abraham offering up his son, Isaac, to the Lord. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said the gospel that I declared unto you, how that Christ died according to the scriptures and was buried according to the scriptures and rose again the third day according to the scriptures. He, of course, was referring to the Old Testament scriptures.

Now we know that there was predicted in the Old Testament, the death of Christ, Isaiah 53, numbered with the transgressors in his death, Psalm 22, soul poured out to death. We know that the scriptures prophesied he would be buried and he made his grave with the rich. But where in the Old Testament is there a prophecy of his rising again the third day? It was prefigured in Jonah.

And Jesus brought that out as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the well. So shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. But where in the scripture, the Old Testament, does it speak of the resurrection after three days? And we go to the story of Abraham, where God said unto Abraham, Abraham, and he said, here am I. And he said, take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, and offer him as a sacrifice in the place that I will show you.

Now, a lot of people from the secular world take this particular story to put down the Bible and to put down God. What kind of a God is he that would require a man to offer his son as a human sacrifice? And because they only read the story in a cursory manner, they are confused and they ridicule such a God that

would require such a thing of a man. Take now thy son, thine only son, God said.

Was Isaac his only son? No, he had another son by Hagar named Ishmael, who was some 13 years older than Isaac. But as God said, through Isaac shall thy seed be called. So that God did not recognize Abraham's work of the flesh.

He only recognized that work of the Spirit, the son of promise, Isaac. Again, we usually in our minds picture Isaac, because of the Sunday school papers that we had, of being maybe 8 to 10 years old. And so we see this 100-year-old Abraham, 108 at this time, leading this little 8-year-old boy towards Mount Moriah where he's going to offer him as a human sacrifice unto God.

The idea being of God asking Abraham to give the most cherished possession that he had to him. Testing of Abraham, will you hold back anything from me, Abraham? Now we are told, well, the age of the child, Isaac was probably 27 years old by this time, not leading a little boy. The scripture would indicate that he's in his 20s, late 20s probably at this point.

So that means Abraham was probably 125 or so by this time. And Isaac being in the prime of his youth could have easily overpowered his dad and said, okay, dad, that's enough, you know, what's going on here, you know. Isaac was willingly submissive to the Father's will.

For three days they journeyed from Hebron. And in the mind of Abraham for those three days, his son Isaac was dead because he knew that God had required that he offer him as a sacrifice in the place that he was shown. After three days, the Lord showed to Abraham Mount Moriah.

And so Abraham said to the servants, you wait here, I and the lad will go and will worship God and will come again. There is employed in that particular text, what is known grammatically in the Hebrew as a polysyndeton. That is the repetition of the word and over and over you just find and, and, and, and, which in the grammatical structure indicates a continued deliberate action.

No hesitation, just the movement continued in deliberate, but it is interesting. I am allowed, we'll go and we'll worship God and will come again. He's declaring that Isaac's going to come back with me.

Now, Abraham figures God's got a problem because God has said through Isaac shall thy seed be called. Isaac has not yet had any children. Isaac has to have children because God has to keep his word.

Now, I don't know how God's going to do it. I know God will do it. I know that God's word is faithful.

God's word is true. God will keep his word. And God has said now offer Isaac.

So I'll offer Isaac, but somehow God's got to work some kind of a miracle because Isaac doesn't have any children yet. And through Isaac, the nation is to be developed. I see because so he believed notice he believed that God would, God was able to raise him up really from the dead.

He believed in the resurrection. God's able to raise this boy up from the dead if necessary, to keep his promise to me through Isaac shall thy seed be called. So he was going on sheer faith in the word of God through Isaac shall the seed be called.

I'll do it. God has to do something, raise him from the dead or something because I and the lad will go and we will come again.

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