

The Book of Hebrews

11. By Faith We Understand



Hebrews 11

By Faith We Understand

Verses 1-3

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 testimony.

3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Faith: The Greek word πιστις *Pistis* (pis'-tis); means conviction of truth based on belief in something. In order to understand faith, we need to understand "Truth". Truth is what is real as opposed to what is not real. God does or does not

exist. He cannot both exist and not exist. Faith believes "Something" is "True" without having witnessed its actualization. We do not have to believe we exist, we know we exist it not a matter of faith.

Faith is required to exist in this physical world. When you approach your car to start it, a degree of faith is required. There is no assurance the car is going to start just because it started in the past. Once the car has started, faith is no longer in operation in "started car", now we know the car starts. Since the car has started in the past, we have a degree of faith that it will start in the future. Faith continues as the driver of the car goes over a bridge, he has faith the bridge will support the car, from experience; therefore he is confident it will do so again.

Though we have not seen God, we have faith in Him. Faith grows from experience and understanding, as we become more confident in God's faithfulness, we learn to trust His Word. The more we understand God's faithfulness through His "Word" our faith grows.

Substance: Faith is material or has "Substance" with God, as opposed to an unreal non-existing quality. The Greek word υποστασις *Hupostasis* (hoop-os'-tas-is); means that which has foundation, is firm, which has actual existence a substance, real being. Our faith is the method by which God will judge our hearts.

8 for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, [it is] the gift of God;
Ephesians 2:8

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference
Romans 3:21-22

Evidence: Contrasted with **hoped for**, here evidence means the realization of what is "hoped for". Believing that God can accomplish the task without having seen the task accomplished the writer of Hebrews then uses examples of faith, to give dimension to his definition.

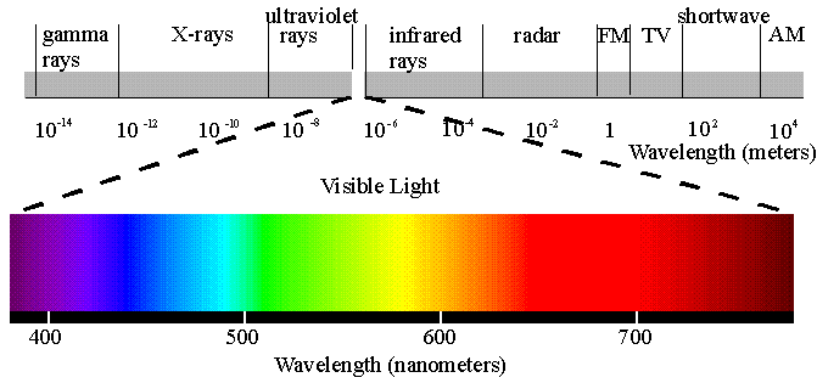
Elders: Using the examples of the heroes of the faith, the writer calls them elders, translated from the word, presbuteros *Presbuteros* meaning an elder of age. The examples listed in this chapter are demonstrations on how those who have faith, should and can operate under trial.

We understand: The writer of Hebrews is addressing his total audience, he is trying to take them to the next level in understanding Christ. The necessity of faith was not different for those who came before the Christ. He starts at the most basic, element of faith. The creation of the universe, knowing that God merely spoke the universe into existence takes faith.

Worlds: The word used here is "Aions" meaning ages, or universe.

Word of God: The “*Rhema*” or spoken word not “*Logos*”, God brought the universe into existence. To understand the concept of creation of the universe requires faith.

The atheist also has faith, he/she has to believe the universe and matter became the earth, since



they are finite. How did they come into existence? What was the source? These answers are unknown for those who deny God's existence, therefore to say there is “No God” (The First Cause) takes faith.

Things seen: The visible spectrum is small, *infrared* and *ultraviolet* light mark both ends of the visible spectrum. Radio and

satellite waves are part of this same spectrum, but we cannot comprehend this physical spectrum with our senses. Our senses cannot receive the signals in these spectra of light, they were not created to see beyond the our visible spectrum.

Things...visible: The spiritual realm is greater then the physical and cannot be seen in the physical. From this invisible realm, comes the visible world we live in. The physical world we live in is secondary to this greater invisible realm.

Faith at the Dawn of History *Verses 4-7*

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But 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 diligently seek Him.

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Abel: Abel was the 2nd born son of Adam and Eve, he was slain by his brother Cain in a jealous rage, after God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's. The reason Cain's rejection has been a subject of debate.

3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.

4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, Genesis 4:3-4

Did God require a blood sacrifice when Cain only offered a fruit sacrifice? This could be one possibility (Hebrews 9:22). The text reveals another reason; Cain's sacrifice was just an offering while Abel's offering was the “Firstborn” and included the “Fat”. Abel did not hold back, he gave God the best, while Cain's offering was not the best he could offer.

God warns Cain and shows him the way to solve his problem, but Cain rather than work on his heart and relationship choose to kill his brother.

6 So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

Genesis 4:6-7

God's solution for Cain, “do well” and “be accepted”. Do what is right Cain and everything will go well with you, but if you reject doing the right action, then you are open to “Sin” ruling your life. This was Cain's problem, sin became his master him in the end.

More excellent: Abel's sacrifice was acceptable while Cain's was not. Cain's sacrifice was his way rather than God's way. The contrast between these two brothers plays out in the world today. There is a right way to God, as opposed to a way we "Think is right". Those who reject God's way and choose their own are the spiritual offspring of Cain. Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

14 "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.
Matthew 7:14

Enoch: Enoch was one of two people who never died in scripture the other is Elijah. Enoch had a **testimony** that was pleasing to God. Enoch reflected God's presence through his life; he was a man of faith. Enoch was also great grandfather of Noah, (Enoch-Methuselah -Lamech-Noah) and the descendent of those alive today.

Without Faith: Can the person who does not believe in God's existence be pleasing to God? Faith is the only road to God; no one will ever be pleasing to God as a result of works. God looks at the substance of faith. To deny God's existence is deny God's goodness, His identity and creation.

Impossible: What would be the purpose in doing something for God, if you did not believe He exists? The only reason would be self-worship or people pleasing.

Rewarder: The Greek word, ~~misqapodoth~~ **Misthapodotes** (mis-thap-od-ot'-ace); means wage payer. There is a purpose to existence beyond this life; those who diligently seek God will be rewarded.

Noah: The Arc took 120 years to build, and became a testimony and condemnation on the pre-flood earth. When floodwaters came, Noah demonstrated God's righteous judgment. Noah acted on faith, he never saw rain, and could not comprehend the totality of God's judgment, but his faith was put in action by his building the boat in preparation of what God told him.

Faithful Abraham *Verses 8-12*

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

9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude-innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

Abraham: He was 80 years old and living in the city of Ur, God called him to Moriah (Jerusalem). He left his security of what he knew to go an area unknown to him. He was obedient to God through faith.

Receive as an inheritance: Abraham could not completely understand what was promised to him. The land of Moriah, its implications for future generations were beyond his understanding but he acted on faith.

Land of promise; God who owned all things gave the land to Abraham, but Abraham did not take possession of the land but lived like a foreigner on his property. In the city of Hebron, 20 miles south of Jerusalem are the tombs of Abraham, **Isaac and Jacob** along with their wives. During their lives in Canaan, they had no permanent dwelling, they lived in **tents**.

Waited for the city: The eventual hope was beyond this Earth, they looked for a dwelling with God, the earth only is shadow of what is to come. The "New Jerusalem" will one day be home to all the saints, Old Testament, New Testament and Millennial.

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

Revelation 21:2-3

Sarah: She was 90 years old when she gave birth to Isaac, well beyond child bearing years, even though she first laughed at the promise, she believed God. (Genesis 16:17)

The Heavenly Hope
Verses 13-16

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

The promises: All the saints, from Abel to Abraham, did not receive the promise of eternity, but saw it in the future and they lived their lives with these promises in mind. A long distance runner will fix his eyes on a distant location and run towards the mark, pacing his run to reach the goal. These Old Testament saints were looking forward to one day dwelling with God. They lived their lives based on the promises of God. The *elders* are examples to the New Testament saints, a model for those in the New Covenant, who looked forward to the coming of the Messiah (Christ).

Afar off: Every believer should live his or her life with Heaven in mind. This is the mindset of the Old Testament saints. They lived with a Heavenly perspective. Peter asked Jesus, about his future and the answer applies to all who have a heavenly mindset.

27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?"

28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

30 "But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Matthew 19:27-30

Strangers and pilgrims: They viewed this world as the foreign land, this is not our home, and our home is in heaven. We are here for a short time to do God's service. The Greek word for pilgrims is *parepidēthōs* *Parepidemos* (par-ep-id'-ay-mos); and means one who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives.

Heavenly county: The last two chapters of Revelation, paint the picture for the home which all saints will one day dwell.

Prepared a city: The future dwelling of the saints is God's work, the reward for those who have faith. These examples of faith, lived their life with this end in view, they looked to the city where they dwell with God. Jesus made this same promise to those who trust in Him.

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

John 14:2-3

Jesus has a place prepared for each person who puts their trust in Him, as believers our home is in Heaven, and our eyes should be fixed to our goal. The last two chapters of Revelation (21-22) describe the picture of the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem, where the saints dwell in the presence of God for the rest of eternity.

The Faith of the Patriarchs
Verses 17-22

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"

19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

Offered up Isaac: Abraham, who loved Isaac more than anything in this world, he would have offered him up to God as a sacrifice, if God did not stop him. Isaac who was 37 years at this time willingly gave himself up for a sacrifice to God. Abraham knew God could resurrect Isaac, both Abraham and Isaac had complete faith in God's ability. (Genesis 22)

Isaac blessed: Both Jacob and Esau received a blessing from Isaac, regarding their future. Isaac's blessing came with the assurance of God's word. He knew God would accomplish his word. (Genesis 27:27,39-40)

Jacob: Jacob knew God would accomplish his word, and he spoke prophetically about the future of his sons. (Genesis 48-49) Jacob foretold the coming of the Messiah from the tribe of Judah, who was to be the obedience (Cleansing, purging) of his people.

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

Genesis 49:10

Joseph: He knew through the inspiration of God's Spirit, Jacob's descendents would leave the land of Egypt. Joseph believed and gave instructions based on his faith. This day there is tomb in Israel, known as the Tomb of Joseph, where his bones are buried.

24 And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

25 Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." Genesis 50:24-25

The Faith of Moses *Verses 23-29*

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.
24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him



Tomb of Joseph in Israel

who is invisible.

28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

Moses: The birth of Moses was the result of faith, his parents rejected the orders of Pharaoh because they had faith. They knew God could save their child, the Lord could provide rescue to their child. Because of their faith, Moses was able to deliver them, and their fellow Israelites from Egyptian oppression.

Not afraid: Fear is a demonstration in the lack of faith, the greater our faith, the less we need to fear the problems of this world. This is the point the author of Hebrews is trying to make. In 2 Kings 6, we see Elisha and his servant, his servant sees the armies of Syria and fears, while Elisha knows the power of the Lord. Elisha, does not fear the armies of Syria because he has faith in the Lord's power.

Refused to be called: Moses like his parents rejected, Egypt, which is a picture or type of the "World", as opposed to the Kingdom of God. Moses rejected the kingdoms of this world, willing to

suffer the consequences because he had faith.

Suffer affliction: because of rejecting Egypt, Moses fled from Pharaoh, and gave up the luxuries of Egypt for the desert. For 40-years, Moses tended the sheep of Midian in the deserts of Sinai.

Esteeming the reproach of Christ: Moses lived 1450 years before the time of Christ in the New Testament, Jesus was fully God who revealed Himself to Israel in the Old Testament, He was the "Glory of the Lord", the "Shekinah", the Arm of the Lord, who led Israel through the desert of Sinai.

Looked to the reward: Moses knew a greater reward awaited him, an eternal reward, greater than the riches of the world, or Egypt. This is the same reward we should look for, not what the world offers, but what Heaven offers.

By faith: Moses lived a life of faith, which allowed the Lord to use him. At the age of 80, after tending sheep for 40 years the Lord appeared to Moses in the bush. From that point, God could use Moses to deliver his people from the oppression of Egypt.

Not fearing: Moses challenged the power of Egypt with a staff and his faith in the God of Israel, standing before Pharaoh he represented the God of Israel.

Kept the Passover: Because of Moses' faith, God could deliver Israel and demonstrate his power. Moses stood at the Red Sea, and the waters moved, Moses believed God had the power, God could open the waters as the armies of Pharaoh pursued fleeing Israel.

By Faith They Overcame
Verses 30-40

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:

33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented

38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

The walls of Jericho: Who could imagine the walls of a city falling by just circling them? The children of Israel believed the words of Joshua. They did not see the walls fall, so it took faith to circle and not say a word. They unlike their disobedient parents had learned to trust God, they knew God could accomplish what he said He would do. For this reason, they entered the Promised Land.

Harlot Rahab: Rahab even before the spies entered the land, heard about the God had done for the Hebrew slaves of Egypt. Word had reached Jericho; the whole land was in an uproar about the coming of the Hebrews. She trusted the God of Israel, she wanted to become part of God's people, she risked her life because she knew God would save her. The whole city could have repented and believed, they choose to oppose Israel, because they did not believe God could deliver their city.

As a result, Rahab not only saved her own life, she saved her families and any who entered her house. She also became part of the line of King David and later the Messiah. She is an example of God's redemption, from harlot to progenitor of the Messiah.

What more: Throughout the scriptures we have many pictures. These were listed as only a starting point, The story continues from Rahab, to **Gideon** the judge who with 300 men delivered Israel from the armies of Midian. The same goes for Barak, Samson, Jephthah and David, all men of faith, who God

used to deliver Israel. These are examples for all the faithful who follow their example.

Samuel an the prophets: The writer of Hebrews is summing up all the faithful of the Old Testament, these are all men of faith, each story is for us to examine and learn from. The writer to the Hebrews wants his reader to understand, you follow in their legacy.

Through faith: What does the life of the faithful person accomplish? Here the writer gives us two lists, one a list of success in this world, visible victories of the saints, and miracles of deliverance. The other list of apprehend defeat. People suffering for their faith and dying, both groups are victorious because his life is not the end of the matter. The resurrection and eternity is what our focus should be.

Examples of victory in the world

- through faith subdued kingdoms
- worked righteousness,
- obtained promises,
- stopped the mouths of lions,
- quenched the violence of fire,
- escaped the edge of the sword,
- out of weakness were made strong,
- became valiant in battle,
- turned to flight the armies of the aliens.
- Women received their dead raised to life again.

Examples of "Apparent" defeat in the world

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- Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.
- Others had trial of mockings and scourgings,
- Chains and imprisonment.
- They were stoned,
- they were sawn in two,
- Were tempted, were slain with the sword.
- They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented
- Wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth

World was not worthy: In all this we as saints, must realize this is not our home, this is not our world or kingdom. We are not to focus our lives here, we are only visitors, seeking an eternal kingdom. The world is not worthy, because it is fallen, Jesus came to redeem lost people, to salvage the souls to be saved. If you are saved, your home is not in this fallen world.

Good testimony through faith: We are part of this story, this is our story, whatever our circumstances we like the saints before should strive to have a "Good" testimony of faith. The point here is the story is not over yet, these saints did not receive the promise...yet! God is waiting to give the promise to all the faithful at the same time.

Apart from us: We will receive the promise at the same time together, with the saints who have gone before us. Imagine, one day you will meet the people in this list, God is holding off giving them the promise, because he wants to give you the promise at the same time. What a day it will be for the faithful, when we receive the promise of the resurrection?

If this is the case, what do we do about it? We move forward with victory.