

~Hebrews~

Lesson 25 – By Faith... Abel, Enoch, Noah

In the first three verses of chapter 11 we have learned what faith is and how it operates in the kingdom of God.

Faith is the foundation of our hope, the convicting proof of the accomplished, unseen work of Jesus Christ.

As we now venture into the next 37 verses of chapter 11, namely the exploits of faith, we need to have in our hearts the convicted proof of:

A future, unseen hope of eternal life in Jesus standing on the foundation faith.

These examples of faith are not random, but specifically picked out by the Apostle Paul based on the premise of a future, unseen hope of salvation and newness of life.

Isaiah 43:18-19, 25¹⁸ “Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new thing... ²⁵ “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.

- This salvation and newness of life, namely righteousness through faith, is displayed in each and every example
- Paul is admonishing the Hebrew Christians not to fall back into the seen, temporal things of an obsolete covenant and dead human traditions, but rather hope in the future, unseen salvation of Jesus Christ through faith.
- The traditions of men stripped away the idea of righteousness through faith in Christ.
 - The unbelieving Jews in the 1st century set their hope on the seen, temporal works of the flesh instead of righteousness through faith in Christ their Messiah, Matt 23:24 (strain out a gnat and swallow a camel)

Before we jump into the exploits of faith, I want to read something from the letter to the Philippians.

- This was Paul’s testimony of renouncing the Jewish traditions and turning to the Way of Jesus.
 - I believe it was this concept of sanctification, a separation from the world, that he was trying to impress on the Hebrew Christians with his letter to the Hebrews.

Philippians 3:2-14- ² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ...

¹² ...I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ ... but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 3:6 but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

- As we go through these verses, this is the mindset Paul had in choosing these examples of faith
 - As we will see, the concept of salvation through faith in the Messiah is not just a New Covenant principle.
 - In this dispensation we have the revealed knowledge of the mystery of Christ, Eph 3:3-5
 - But that doesn’t mean the premise of righteousness through faith was not in effect as we will see in the upcoming verses.

Every example presented in chapter 11 begins with the words “By faith”

- These Old Testament saints stood their future hope of salvation in the Messiah on the foundation of faith that came out from the Word of God

Abel

Hebrews 11:4 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.

Let's read the account from Genesis:

Genesis 4:3-5. 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, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

As we read the story, we know Cain killed Abel out of jealousy and shame, making Abel the first martyr in history.

Paul says Abel's sacrifice was "by faith".

- We know from our lesson last week, Rom 10:17 says faith must come from an understanding of the Word of God.
- This means Abel heard the Word of God, either directly from God or through his parents, Adam and Eve, and received this Word into his life and gained an understanding.

As early as Adam and Eve, before the Old Covenant and the Law, the concept of animal sacrifice as the remedy for sin was established.

Hebrews 9:22 ...without shedding of blood is no remission.

- I believe God made it known that He expected an animal sacrifice
 - God sacrificed an animal to cover Adam and Eve, Gen 3:21
 - This was a type of Jesus being our sacrifice to cover us with His blood and remedy sin.
 - Noah knew about clean and unclean animals and made a burnt offering to the Lord after the Flood with clean animals, Gen 8:20
- By faith Abel offered a blood sacrifice to God.
 - A sacrifice of atonement, acknowledging himself as a sinner and the sacrifice of innocent blood as the remedy of sin, Gen 4:4
 - Abel didn't have concept of the predestined plan of God that He would send His Son to be the Sacrifice for the sins of the world, but he did know from example the sacrifice of innocent blood to cover sin.
 - Adam and Eve, as well as Abel also knew of the future Savior, the Seed who would crush the head of the serpent, Gen 3:15.
- This was 2,000 years before Abraham and 2,500 years before the Law of Moses.
- During these first 2,000 years and up until Jesus was made flesh, God was preparing the Body to be sacrificed, Heb 10:5-8.
 - God was forming the Way to send His Son into the world.
 - And He expected His people to honor this Way.
 - The blood sacrifice for sin leading up to Jesus was a foreshadowing of the final sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who is Jesus Christ, Heb 10:8-10

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain

Why was Abel's sacrifice counted more excellent than Cain's?

- It was by faith that Abel brought the firstfruit of his flock, a blood sacrifice for his sin.
 - This was the Way of God
 - Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, Lev 17:11, Heb 9:22
 - Abel also brought the best, or the fattest of his firstfruit, Gen 4:4
 - This showed Abel's heart toward God
- Cain's offering was not accepted because he brought the work of his hands, Gen 4:3-4
 - Cain's offering was not of faith, but of works
 - This was the "way of Cain" as Jude describes, Jude 11
 - Presenting our works to God, instead of faith in Jesus' completed work
 - Trying to earn something from God by works instead of faith
 - But if it is by works then it cannot be by grace, Rom 4:16
 - This is what the Jews were trying to do through the Law
 - Not only did Cain not bring the sacrifice that God wanted (which was a blood sacrifice), he

didn't even bring the firstfruits or the best of the ground.

- This shows the evil heart of Cain.
- Paul is using this example of faith to the Hebrew Christians for two reasons:
 - To show the future hope of the Messiah by Abel offering a sacrifice of blood
 - He is also contrasting those who walk by the Way of God through faith and those who walk by their own way, trying to earn righteousness by their good works through the Law.
 - Anyone trying to earn their righteousness by the Law, as the unbelieving Jews were, is walking in the way of Cain.

Hebrews 11:4 ...through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts...

- It was through this faith that Abel was accounted righteous
- **“Obtained witness”**~ this is the same passive verb from 11:2.
 - God is bearing witness, or testifying about Abel that he was accounted righteous by his faith

Hebrews 11:4 ... and through it he being dead still speaks.

- Through the blood sacrifice offered to God, he was murdered by his brother, Gen 4:8
- Abel's faith is still speaking because God is testifying of his gifts
 - This word testifying is a present active participle meaning God is still actively speaking about the faith of Abel through His Word.
 - We are reading it today, which is proof that God is still testifying of his faith.

Enoch

Hebrews 11:5 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.

Gen 5:21-24- Enoch had a personal relationship with God, Gen 5:22 says “he walked with God”

In Heb 11:5 the Greek word for taken is μετετέθη. It is a passive verb meaning God took him or moved him, as in being carried away, Acts 7:16. It has also been translated as changed, Heb 7:12, (the changing priesthood)

- This “taken away” is a type of the rapture to come.
 - Paul is using the example of Enoch to build hope for the future harpazo, ἀρπάζω (the rapture, the catching away of the saints, 1 Thes 4:17)

There is only two people **so far** that have been “taken” without dying physically.

- Enoch and Elijah
 - (But at the rapture, there will be thousands, maybe even millions who will be taken without dying)
 - Only the faithful, those who “walk with God” will be caught away at the rapture, Rev 2:3-5, 3:2-3; Lk 21:34-36, 12:35-48, 17:28-34; Matt 25:1-13, 24:37-42; Heb 6:4-8; Mk 13:31-37

Titus 2:13 (we need to be) looking for the **blessed hope** and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

This is our hope, being glorified in Jesus to live forever with Him and in Him, Rom 8:23-25, 1 Cor 15:52, and Paul is assuring these Hebrew Christians of this future hope through faith.

Hebrews 11:5 ... for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

“Had this testimony” - This is the same passive verb as 11:2 and 4.

- God is the one bearing witness and testifying of Enoch's faith,
- being so pleased with his faith that He accepted Enoch as a living sacrifice, Rom 12:1.
 - How did these men of old know that God accepted their sacrifice?
 - God came down and took it, usually with fire, Lev 9:24; Judges 6:21; 1 Kings 18:38; 2 Chron 7:1.
 - So will it be with those who are pleasing to Him at the rapture. A living sacrifice taken up into the Father's hands.

Pleasing Faith

Hebrews 11:6 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.

The word “impossible” is an amazing absolute and definitive statement.

- However, this makes perfect sense now that we know the definition and function of faith.
 - Faith is the avenue to God's grace.
 - The requirement to Righteousness.
- If you don't have faith, you don't have God.
 - Thus, impossible to please Him.

Hebrews 11:6 ...for he who comes to God must believe that He is...

We touched on this last week.

- The basic element of faith, the most foundational convictional proof is that the unseen God created the ALL for a specific purpose of having an eternal family.
- To come to God, we must believe that He Is.
 - He is the I AM, John 8:58, Ex 3:14, and the ALL of everything created came out of Him

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore **come boldly to the throne of grace...** (thru Jesus believing that HE IS the GREAT I AM)

Hebrews 11:6 ... and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- **Rewarder**- this is a similar word to that which was used in Heb 10:35

Hebrews 10:35-36 ³⁵ Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great **reward**. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have **done the will of God, you may receive the promise**:

The promise is the **future coming** of Jesus, Titus 2:13; 1 Thes 4:13-18, and our **future glorification in Him**, Rom 8:23-25, 1 Cor 15:52.

- Paul is urging the Hebrew Christians to endure and persevere in this hope that they might receive this future promise.
 - This is doing the will of God in this life, 1 Pet 4:19.
 - So that we will receive the promise of eternal rewards and eternal inheritance being glorified in Him forever, Phil 3:20-21; Rom 8:17; 1 Jn 3:1-3, Rom 8:23-25, 1 Cor 15:52
- Is the reward given to us by the Rewarder, Heb 11:6, based on works or faith?
 - This is a promise of rewards given to the faithful, Col 3:24, Matt 25:21, 1 Cor 3:14
 - We know our justification is **by** grace **through** faith, and **not of works**, Eph 2:8-9.
 - But this is not speaking of justification. This is our reward of inheritance and glorification, Heb 10:36
 - He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Is seeking Him a work or by faith?
 - Everything is done by faith, because without faith it is impossible to please Him
 - These "works" we do are a response to becoming a new creation in Christ, Eph 2:10
 - Our good works were prepared beforehand in Christ that we should walk in them, Eph 2:10
 - We are His workmanship, performing the work of Christ, Eph 2:10
 - This is what I call a **corresponding action** to our faith.
 - It is a willingness in our heart to follow Him according to faith.
 - Being moved by faith or "faith-ing your faith". This is a corresponding action to what we are standing our hope on.
 - Not of works, but a response to Jesus' work.
 - For the works that come out of faith come out of righteousness.
 - It is because we are righteous that we do the work of faith
 - We don't do good works **to make** us righteous.
 - We do good works **because** we are righteous
- This is what James calls a doer of the Word, James 1:22.

Noah

Paul uses this example of Noah to portray an unseen hope of salvation. A rejection of the temporal world and a hope in God's promise.

- Noah had faith in the unseen through the Word of God and then displayed this faith by building the ark as a corresponding action.
- We find the account of Noah and the flood in Genesis chapters 6-9, and we also see his character
 - Just like Enoch, Noah "walked with God", Gen 6:9
 - He also found grace in the eyes of the Lord, Gen 6:8

- there were bad people on the earth- but not even people, abominations of the seed of fallen angels, namely giants that ruled the land, Gen 6:4.
- But even in this destruction Noah is said to be a “preacher of righteousness”, 2 Pet 2:5
 - Noah had a personal relationship with God and He chose Noah to carry on the promise of the “Seed”, Gen 9:9.

Hebrews 11:7 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.

- being divinely warned of things not yet seen
 - Noah was warned of unseen rain, Gen 2:5, 6:17, 7:4, but was also promised an unseen salvation, 6:14, 18
- moved with godly fear, prepared an ark - this is his corresponding action in faith on the divine Word, Gen 6:22, 7:5
- he condemned the world – this is perseverance and enduring with sufferings, 2 Pet 2:5, Gen 6:22, Heb 10:32
 - in response to the promised salvation, Noah chose to condemn the world and suffer affliction than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, Heb 11:25.
- And became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith – this is his reward for diligently seeking Him
 - Noah was not only saved from wrath and judgement, but was also accounted for a future righteousness and eternal salvation through faith, Gen 6:18, 9:8, 16
 - His faith, his righteousness, and his willingness to separate himself from the world gave him an avenue to God’s grace and mercy, Gen 6:8

Not only do we see Noah reject the world for a future hope in the promise, we also are given a type, a foreshadowing of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

- 1 Peter tells us that the ark, being saved through water, is a type of our baptism in Christ, 1 Pet 3:21, Lk 12:50 (death, burial, and resurrection)
 - This is the new creation Isaiah spoke of, Isaiah 43:18–19, 25
 - It is our new creation in Christ, 2 Cor 5:17

Romans 6:3-5 ³ ... as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

To signify this even deeper, the ark rested on Mount Ararat out from the deluge on the 17th of Nisan

- Jesus also was raised from the dead on the 17th of Nisan!
- God used the ark to foreshadow the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to the very day!

We as Christians should be living a different life than the rest of the world.

- We, the just, live by faith. We are of those who believe to the saving of the soul, Heb 10:38-39.
- Our hope is in the eternal, not this temporal world. We need to be actively separating ourselves from things of this world.
- Time after time in the Scriptures we are encouraged to not entangle ourselves with this life and seek the eternal life that lies ahead, 2 Tim 2:4; 1 Jn 2:15, 3:13, 4:4, 5:5; 1 Pet 4:4, 12; 2 Pet 1:4, James 1:26; Heb 12:4.
- As we continue chapter 11, we will see that the main focus is not to use faith to get what you can in this life or to make this life easier, but rather it is quite the opposite.
- Most, and I can argue that all of these people in chapter 11 gave up their life in this world to seek a heavenly life with a future hope.

Just as Abel, Enoch and Noah rejected the world and chose the eternal things of God. We too must be seeking an eternal hope in Jesus. An eternal life in Him; desiring a Heavenly country in which

He is preparing a city, a Place, which is His Body for us to abide in Him

FOREVER.