

Heb. 11:1 ¶ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

“faith” = persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher)

“substance” = a setting under (support...assurance (objectively or subjectively):—confidence

“hoped for” = to expect; from a root that states “to anticipate, usually with pleasure”

“evidence” = proof, conviction

I thought it was important to understand these words as we prepare to understand the faith of the individuals that are singled out for reference in this “honor roll” of believers. Most of the words are used in a different context of understanding today. We think of *substance* as something that can be seen and touched. We use *hope* to indicate desire or something wished for, but not necessarily with confidence of attainment. As with substance, we think of *evidence* as tangible or discernible by sight or reason.

In the Greek these words are more rooted in a person’s being and state of mind. I’m not sure I’m saying it the right way, but the meanings of these words are not rooted in the tangible. To the person of faith, however, their persuasion/conviction of the truth is the very foundation upon which he/she lives life—a foundation just as solid and firm as any tangible/material foundation for any structure can be. Their faith is rooted in what cannot be seen. This faith, however, is not blind faith. There is a wealth of evidence in scripture, in history, and in the creation to support their faith.

Heb. 11:2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

“obtained a good report” = to be a witness, i.e. testify... be well reported of

I thought the Greek made reference to two sides of the coin. The elders, or men of faith from ages past, gave witness to their faith by how they lived; and that witness earned them a good report not only from other people of faith—but from Almighty God.

Heb. 11:3 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.

Though we cannot prove it through the scientific method, people of faith are absolutely convinced that God created the worlds by speaking it into existence. *Understand* is a reference to comprehending truth through exercising our mind as we observe and consider the evidence of creation. Evolutionists try to tell us that all of a sudden there was an explosion of something out of nothing. Though we cannot explain God, the evidence of His design in creation is too obvious to ignore. It takes much more “faith” to believe the theory of evolution than it does

to accept the words of Almighty God that He spoke the creation into existence according to His good pleasure.

Heb. 11:4 ¶ By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

This verse begins a listing of people of faith that I believe God chose specifically to encourage us in our own walk of faith as we await the return of Jesus to establish His Kingdom on earth.

Abel is singled out for submission and obedience in sacrifice. Jon Courson helped me to understand that Abel was being obedient and, in fact, knew what God expected from him. He quoted Paul's words to the Romans.

Rom. 10:17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

With that verse and this verse in Hebrews the Holy Spirit is telling us that Abel had heard God's words of instruction and responded in obedience.

It just stood out to me that Abel's sacrifice was considered more valuable than Cain's because it was done in faithful obedience to God's instruction. Cain's sacrifice is being recognized for what it is—less in value because it was chosen in accordance with his own will rather than God's will. Abel's testimony was one of righteousness, while Cain's was one of pride. Although Abel has been dead for thousands of years, God is still using his example of faithful obedience to speak to people of faith today.

As I continued to think about this verse, it's a shame that it is the actions of Cain that seem to be the more emulated in the "church" today. We say we want to honor God, but we want to do it on our own terms. We want to be selective in the areas of life that we are willing to submit to God as Lord. We want to choose the sacrifices we make according to our own will and purposes more often than not. The truth is that sacrifices made in that spirit are not true sacrifices at all, because the cost does not truly cause us to die to self and yield to God.

Heb. 11:5 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.

Enoch is singled out next. He was privileged to be taken to the presence of God without experiencing physical death. The reason given for this privilege—"he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

One can't help but wonder, "Why Enoch?" There are many other men of faith recorded in scripture whose lives seemed to have pleased God. It stands out to me that not much else is known about Enoch. In that regard, he is an encouragement to the many people of faith who, though not well known, have a testimony before others that declares they trust God as Lord.

Because God's plan has been in place since before creation, I think God established Enoch as a specific example of encouragement to those in the church

who would be looking for the rapture. All those in the body of Christ are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus and are, therefore, pleasing to God. Just as surely as Enoch was taken without seeing death, so too will the body of believers who are living at the time so designated on God's calendar in deliverance of His coming wrath.

2Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1Cor. 15:51-52 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

(3/10) In fact, the Holy Spirit is saying that Enoch was translated with the intent that he not experience death—just as those who will experience the rapture.

Heb. 11:6 But without faith *it is impossible to please him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*.

It is significant to me that this verse is placed right after the reference to Enoch. It is not how well known we are or how important we are perceived to be in the eyes of others that positions us to please God. It is our faith that pleases God. To be able to draw near (from the Greek for "cometh") to God requires that one believe:

1. that He is.
2. that He rewards those that diligently seek Him.

To believe that *God is* makes reference to God as recorded in scripture through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is not referencing unknowable "higher powers" or the false gods of other religions. It is not a reference to an unknowable universal life force. The One True God has revealed Himself to us through His word, His creation, people of faith, and most completely in His Son Jesus Christ. Those who claim that there is no God or reject the one true God will not be allowed into His presence; they will be eternally separated from Him—the most awful aspect of eternal condemnation.

Those who truly want to please God will "diligently seek Him." The Greek for that phrase makes reference to searching out, craving and worshipping Him. This is very thought provoking. How many of us can actually use those words to describe our attitude toward God? I know that for most of my life, it would not have been an accurate description of me. I was actually more concerned with pleasing men than pleasing God. I was serving in the church, but not always with a pure heart—though it pains me now to admit it. I can, however, rejoice that I now have a far better understanding of God's faithfulness and love in retrospect. No matter how weak my life revealed my faith to be, God's faithfulness never waived. I relate very personally to Jesus' teaching that those who have been forgiven much, love much.

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, 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.

Next up is Noah. Noah's example is one of obeying God in response to revelation concerning things that were as yet unknown at the time. Rain did not become a part of the weather cycle until the flood; the earth was watered by a mist from the earth until that time.

Gen. 2:6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

Scripture indicates that at one point in time God determined to destroy man after 120 years and singled out Noah as the recipient of this decision. Although I don't think one can be dogmatic from the biblical record, many conclude that Noah spent most of that designated time building the ark.

Gen. 6:3 ¶ And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

Gen. 6:13 ¶ And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Gen. 6:14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood....

Common sense tells me that it took Noah a long time to build the ark considering the building tools available to him and the size of the ark. So no matter the timeframe, Noah's obedience in building the ark would have placed him in a position of ridicule before his neighbors for a long period of time. Peter tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, so we know he was faithful in declaring God's truth.

2Pet. 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Noah wasn't daunted by ridicule or the immensity of the task God had assigned him. He proceeded in faith to obey God without question (according to the record).

Noah is an amazing example of stepping out in faith and obedience to God's leading in the life of each child of God. We don't need to understand how or why; we just need to step out in faith and obedience that He will provide as He guides. He is also a significant example of the fact that our obedience to God has a direct impact on our family.

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Heb. 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

Abraham was called out from an idolatrous culture to leave family and follow God's leading to a new land where God promised to make of him a great nation. Not only that, He promised that through Abraham ALL families of the earth

would be blessed. That promise was repeated to his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob.

It was interesting to me in my study of Genesis to find that although Abraham was of the 10th generation from Shem, Shem was still alive when Abraham was born and actually lived 210 years more. There is so much left out of the story that I would like to know, but I do believe that Abraham knew about Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth. I think God must have chosen Abraham because He knew him to be an humble man who feared the God he did not really know.

I think it is also important to note that Abraham didn't have a clue where he was going, but that didn't deter him from stepping out in faith to follow God's leading. According to the biblical record, Abraham, like Noah, unhesitatingly stepped out in faith and obedience to God's call. Abraham's obedience shows him to be a man who honored God over and above family. This reminds me of the Lord's own words.

Matt. 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Even when he got to the "land of promise," Abraham didn't whine and complain when God didn't give him the land right away. Although scripture records that he questioned God and that he made some big mistakes along the way, he never rebelled against God. Even when God told him that his descendants would serve as slaves in a foreign nation for 400 years before inheriting "the promised land," he did not waiver in his faith and obedience to God.

Abraham speaks to the person of faith of the necessity of putting God first and foremost in your life—over and above even family. Abraham also speaks to me about not allowing expectations to cause you to stumble in your faith. He didn't turn around and go back home when he realized that he wouldn't see God's promises to him fulfilled, and that his whole life would be lived as a nomad dwelling in tents in the land that God promised to give him.

Abraham is also a wonderful example of God's faithfulness in spite of our unfaithfulness along the way. He loves us enough to let us learn from our mistakes as He faithfully propels us forward to accomplish His will. It's one of the most amazing testimonies to me to the power of Almighty God that He allows each one of His children to make their own choices along the way, yet the bad choices we make are never allowed to thwart His purposes.

Heb. 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

This verse has always intrigued me. It seems to indicate that he expected God Himself to establish a city in which He would dwell with Abraham and his descendants. I believe that expectation will be realized with the advent of the New Jerusalem when Christ comes to establish His earthly throne in Jerusalem from which He will rule in the Millennium. In retrospect, it is just intriguing to me that Abraham would have a grasp of that truth. It intrigues me in the same way that Job understood that he would one day see God in his flesh. The study

of the scripture continually reminds me that we are only given a small part of the story. I expect to be truly amazed by the things that will be revealed to us in the future regarding the whole story.

Heb. 11:11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

I was surprised to find that some of the translations of this verse kept the focus on Abraham's faith, and not Sarah's. I personally believe the focus to be on Sarah as stated in the KJV and others, because God seemed to go out of His way to include women in the biblical record despite the fact that women were not held in the same esteem as men in that culture at that time. As we have noted before, God is no respecter of persons; and I believe He included a record of women, both good and bad, as an encouragement and/or warning to women of faith.

The biblical record tells us that Sarah made mistakes and had doubts along the way in her journey of faith, but she is singled out as recognizing that God's faithfulness is not dependent upon ours.

I relate to Sarah in several ways. When encouraging her husband to take matters into his own hands regarding obtaining an heir, she justified her decision as one that could be according to God's will. She knew that God had promised them a son, but she also recognized the physical facts that her childbearing years were at an end. So, she figured she would help God out. I can't tell you how many decisions I have made in life using faulty justification that I wish I could take back!

I also relate to Sarah in that God appears to have honored her heart and not her actions. In spite of the many mistakes I have made as a wife and mom along the way, I feel like God has honored my heart so to speak. I've always desired to raise my children to serve the Lord, and they all have a strong testimony of love for the Lord and seem to be on solid paths of continued spiritual growth.

Sarah is also an example of the fact that "nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:37) It took me many years before I ventured out in a step of faith that seemed unwise from a reasonable and logical human perspective, but which I believe was God's will for me and has proven to grow me spiritually while giving me opportunity to serve Him in ways I would never have expected.

Heb. 11:12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

The "him" in this verse is a reference to Abraham, but both Abraham and Sarah were "as good as dead" regarding physical ability to produce a child. Again, in spite of doubts and questions that arose along the way, the biblical record gives evidence that this couple continued following God in faith and obedience. I believe the birth of Isaac served to strengthen their faith even further.

It's interesting to me that Abraham was promised progeny through Isaac that would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Like his father, Isaac had to wait many years before producing heirs, and that promise was to be fulfilled through only one of his sons, Jacob. Finally, it was through Jacob's twelve sons that the nation of Israel was born. It just emphasizes again how God's ways are so different from ours. I can't help but wonder why He waited to establish the nation through Abraham's grandson. I think He was establishing a foundation of faith upon which Abraham's descendants would be able to build that would bind them together as a unique people before the Lord.

Heb. 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

"These all" = Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham & Sarah

The Holy Spirit is revealing to us that these people of faith all understood and were convinced that based on His promises to them God had a plan for them that would be fulfilled in the distant future. They all considered themselves "strangers and pilgrims" on the earth; in other words, they knew they had a heavenly future.

It was interesting to me that the reference is to "promises," plural. It would seem to me that the one promise that would apply to them all was the promise of the Messiah as stated in Genesis 3:15.

Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

It would also seem that they all, like Job, had some sort of understanding regarding a future in the presence of God. Abraham and Sarah, of course, had the further promise of birthing a chosen people before the Lord that would be innumerable, would inherit the promised land forever, and would be a blessing to all nations on earth through the promised Messiah. Again, I can't wait to know the rest of the story.

Heb. 11:14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

Heb. 11:15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

Heb. 11:16 But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

"such things" = that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth

I thought it was interesting that the Greek for "country" in verse 14 made reference to "fatherland and heavenly home (figuratively)," but only one translation picked up on that. The fact that they considered themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth indicates that they were looking for a home elsewhere; and since the context is regarding their faith in God, it would make sense to be

referencing a “heavenly home.” It’s also interesting to note that “heaven” in our way of thinking is the “Father’s land.”

In emphasizing that their expectation was other-worldly, they weren’t thinking about previous earthly homelands. Verse 16 finally specifies that their expectation was *heavenly*. To live in the presence of God is far better than any other homeland.

We learned in verse 6 that our faith pleases God, the very opposite of causing Him shame. We honor Him and glorify Him through our faith in Him. The writer then goes on to affirm the words of the Savior. He has prepared a heavenly Jerusalem for people of faith. This was what Jesus was referring to in His words as recorded in John 14.

John 14:2 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.**

The Old Testament men and women of faith find their salvation in Jesus just as surely as do those of us who are part of the true church. Their faith was in God’s provision for them through His Son just as surely as is ours; the only difference being that we know the identity of Messiah.

Heb. 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

Heb. 11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Heb. 11:19 Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham is also singled out for his willingness to follow God in faith and obedience even to the sacrifice of his son Isaac—the son through whom God had declared He would fulfill His promise to him. The Greek for “tried” makes reference to testing, examining and proving. Obviously, God already knew Abraham’s response. I believe this exercise was specifically directed toward allowing both Abraham and Isaac to examine their own faith and see it proven genuine. I am sure this test became an anchor in the spiritual growth of both men. Abraham proved his faith by unhesitatingly preparing to sacrifice his son in obedience to God’s command. He didn’t waiver in his commitment to God as his Lord because he knew that God would honor His covenant even if He had to raise Isaac from the dead to do it. After all, Isaac had been born through God’s miraculous intervention. His purpose being accomplished, God did intervene and provided Himself a lamb before Abraham carried through with the sacrifice of His son. When it came to the sacrifice of His own Son, however, God did not intervene. He willingly sacrificed His own Son proving yet again His unconditional love and faithfulness to His word.

Heb. 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

This one is a bit harder. Isaac is singled out for blessing Jacob and Esau regarding their future and that of their descendants.

The biblical record shows that Isaac was deceived into blessing Jacob with all the rights of the firstborn and only blessed Esau after much pleading from his son. The record indicates that he had intended to ignore God’s instruction and bless

Esau instead of Jacob. It is interesting to note that though he questioned Jacob's claim to be Esau, he didn't let his doubt deter him from pronouncing his fullest blessing upon the deceiver. Neither does the record express that Isaac rebuked Jacob for his deceit. In fact, he seems to have understood right away that he had done the right thing.

Gen. 27:33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought *it* me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? **yea, and he shall be blessed.** In fact, before sending Jacob off to get a wife from among his kinsman, Isaac repeated his blessing and acknowledged him as the rightful heir to Abraham's covenant promises.

Gen. 28:3-4 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

Neither did Isaac balk at pronouncing a blessing on Esau that declared him destined to be a man of war and servant to his brother.

These actions proved that Isaac did acknowledge God as Lord and had faith that God would fulfill His promises through Abraham. I believe he was just as sure that his blessing over Esau would come to pass as well.

Isaac gives us a distinct example of the truth that God's plan will come to pass with or without our cooperation. (Obviously, God would have seen that Jacob was blessed without Rachel's and Jacob's deception.) Though we as people of faith may choose to be disobedient at times, we cannot thwart God's purposes. We may cause ourselves more heartache and suffering in the process, but God's plan will unfold according to His purpose. Isaac ended up being unnecessarily separated from his son for many years due to his planned disobedience.

Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

The reference to Jacob here is recorded in Genesis 48. The account is very specific regarding Jacob's deliberate action in granting the greater blessing to the younger Ephraim. His blessing reflected faith that he was expressing God's plan for his two grandsons. It's only through the Spirit's revelation through the writer of Hebrews that we know Jacob was worshipping and supported by his staff; the Genesis account states that he was sick, but that he "strengthened" himself to sit up on the bed and bless the boys. In looking at the meaning of *worship*, it becomes clear that Jacob was honoring God through his actions.

Jacob is a beautiful example of dying grace in acceptance of God's will. It emphasizes to me that, though not often as obvious as in Jacob's life, the life of the person of faith has purpose to the very end. Scripture is clear in stating that our days are numbered from birth according to God's determination.

Job 14:1 & 5 Man *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble....Seeing his days *are* determined, the number of his months *are* with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;

Psa. 39:4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days....

Again, though we may not understand God's purposes, we can be sure that as the author of life, He is the only One with the authority to take life and we should honor every life—even when we don't understand His purpose in extending that life.

Heb. 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

The faith of Joseph is singled out in reference to God's promise to Abraham regarding possession of the land of Canaan.

Gen. 50:24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The wording in Genesis makes me think that he was aware of God's words to Abraham concerning his descendants serving in affliction in a foreign land for 400 years.

Gen. 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

In spite of the fact that approximately 300 years would elapse before that time of deliverance, Joseph declared his faith in God by getting his family to commit to taking his bones with them to bury them in the promised land.

I especially relate to Joseph as I pray for God's will to be done in the lives of my family and to bring loved ones to saving faith. I know I am praying in God's will, and I know His word is true.

1John 5:14 ¶ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

2Pet. 3:9 ¶ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Joseph had faith that God would do what He said. I truly believe we miss out on much that is available to us through faith if we would but ask. There are so many times in scripture that the Lord basically says, "Be it done unto you according to your faith."

Matt. 9:20-22 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him*, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; **thy faith hath made thee whole.**

Matt. 9:28-29 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, **According to your faith be it unto you.**

Matt. 15:28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, **great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.** And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Mark 2:5 **When Jesus saw their faith,** he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

(10/09) As I read through this section again, I felt it was important to clarify that I know that it is God's will for all to come to repentance and that I know God's word is true. The weak link in the process is my faith.

Luke 17:6 "And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you."

Matthew 21:21-22 "Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Mark 11:24 "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

I realize that as I pray for my loved ones, I also need to pray for the Lord to grow my faith to the size of that mustard seed.

Heb. 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was a proper child*; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

In this verse God commends the faith of Moses' parents. This is interesting wording because what parent wouldn't think their child to be beautiful (from the Greek for *proper*, which states "handsome, fair"). I think the truth is that they feared God more than the king. I believe that a regard for human life is one of those things that God imprints on man's conscience.

Rom. 1:18-19 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

Job knew it.

Job 12:9-10 Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? In whose hand *is* the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

Evidently, the midwives knew it as well.

Ex. 1:16-17 And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see *them* upon the stools; if it *be* a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it *be* a daughter, then she shall live. **But the midwives feared God,** and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

As with Cain and Abel, although scripture doesn't record specific instruction regarding God's law until the time that Moses received it at Mt. Sinai, the people knew much about God's law before that time.

The parents of Moses are a prime example of stepping out in faith to honor God in defiance of the laws of man that go against God's will. I believe that Christians in America today are soon going to face a similar testing of their faith. There have already been examples in the news of Christians being taken to court for refusing to compromise their beliefs on the job or in their business. For example:

Las Cruces Sun-News: ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—A professional photographer who refused to take pictures of a gay couple's commitment ceremony because of her religious beliefs violated New Mexico discrimination law, a human rights panel ruled....The commission's one-page ruling Wednesday said Elane Photography violated the state Human Rights Act by discriminating against Willock on the basis of sexual orientation, and should pay \$6,637 for Willock's attorney's fees and costs.

Heb. 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Heb. 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Heb. 11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Heb. 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

This is a very interesting commendation of faith to me. It seems clear to me from the account in Exodus 2 that Moses knew he was a Hebrew and that he had compassion for the plight of his people. He intervened to save a life with the thought that no one was aware of his action, but he did intervene. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Luke records the words of Stephen in Acts 7 through which we are informed that Moses was 40 at this time. He also adds the revelation that Moses thought that his people realized that He would use Moses to deliver them.

Acts 7:25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

There is no indication that Moses thought he would have to leave Egypt before delivering his people, but he had to run away for fear of getting punished for the murder of an Egyptian. That's what makes verse 25 a bit confusing. The fact is that he did suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the privilege of position that was his as Pharaoh's daughter's son, a prince of Egypt, but it didn't seem from the record that he was making that choice at the time he intervened on behalf of the Hebrew slave. In choosing to obey God and confront Pharaoh, however, he did directly align himself with God's people in faith that God would do as He said.

Verse 26 is another time I really wish I knew Greek. I know that Moses was acting in faith and obedience toward God, but there is nothing in the record to indicate that he was acting with knowledge concerning the Christ, the Messiah.

In my mind, the Spirit is making a comparison to the willingness of Moses to suffer whatever was required in following God in obedience because he knew that the reward would far exceed the suffering—as did Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

2Cor. 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

Heb. 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

I finally realized that the reference to leaving Egypt in verse 27 was in reference to when he finally got to lead the people out. By that time his faith was firmly rooted in the character of God, and he knew that God would deliver them. He could not see God, but he had seen ample evidence of His power and authority through the plagues; and he unhesitatingly led the people out of Egypt with confidence that God would provide for them according to His word.

Moses is an example to the believer in many areas.

- He chose righteous action over selfish inaction.
- He didn't let the possibility of suffering deter him from obedience.
- He recognized that the pleasures of sin are only temporary.
- He knew that God's reward would far exceed any personal sacrifice he might make in obeying Him.
- He feared God more than earthly kings.
- He recognized that the key to success was to keep his focus on God.

Heb. 11:28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

The wording of this verse is interesting. "He" (Moses) kept Passover, lest the destroyer touch "them" (the people of Israel). I think the emphasis is on the faith of Moses in leading the people according to God's instruction, but the faith of the people is also being indirectly commended. Considering their knowledge of God's power as experienced through the nine preceding plagues, they were ready to obey their leader as God's representative.

It took the death of the firstborn to bring about deliverance for God's people, but in His grace and mercy He provided for a substitute for the Israelites through their Passover lambs. In the end it took the death of God's firstborn Son, Jesus Christ, to serve as the Passover lamb for all who would come to Him in faith. I am continually amazed at God's unconditional love in response to His people—both then and now. I am so looking forward to the day when I know my every action will be from a pure heart in love and obedience to my Father in heaven.

I think it is important to note that Moses was leading according to God's instruction. Though Moses was privileged to have God speak to Him personally, leaders in the church today have an extensive record in scripture of God's will to guide them through the leading and teaching of the Holy Spirit. Sadly, I think that too often leaders in the church today step out in their own wisdom and according to their own agenda. Everything Moses did directed the attention of

the people to God. More and more often in the church today, the attention of the people is directed to the messenger.

Heb. 11:29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

This too is an interesting verse. Both the Israelites and the Egyptians ventured to cross the Red Sea on dry land, but only the Israelites crossed with faith in their God for deliverance. The Egyptians were proceeding with evil intent and foolish pride and were destroyed.

In this instance the people of Israel gave testimony to the importance of a unified spirit of faith in God in response to the attack of the enemy.

Heb. 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

Again, this reference to faith appears to refer to the people. It's interesting that the faith of the people is recognized in crossing the Red Sea and in the taking of Jericho. These represent times when the people were unified in their faith. The time of wandering in the wilderness is completely ignored.

No military leader would devise a plan that involved marching around a city in silence for seven days while following a sacred object. The record in Joshua tells us that this was the action of 40,000 men of war. On the seventh day they were to march around the city seven times and then the priests were to blow the rams horns and the people were to shout. Their faithful obedience would result in the walls of the city falling down flat. It is quite clear to me that this plan would require a unified spirit of faith since it defies all logic and reason. (See Joshua 4-6 for complete story.)

Again, I am reminded of how God's thoughts and ways are so far beyond our comprehension.

Is. 55:8-9 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

I am reminded that the people of Israel were not privileged to experience the indwelling security of the Holy Spirit. Their strength was in unity of spirit in faith and obedience. When they chose to place their faith in other men rather than in God through His chosen leader, Moses, they suffered the consequences. Just as with the wilderness generation, the "church" today is composed of true people of faith and impostors/unbelievers, wheat and tares. (See topical study "Parables of the Kingdom.") Our testimony is most effective when we act in unity of spirit in faith and obedience to God.

Heb. 11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

This is an interesting verse. We are told that Rahab acted in faith which means that she believed in God. Her response to the spies was enlightening.

Josh. 2:9-11 And she said unto the men, **I know that the LORD hath given you the land**, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For **we** have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as **we** had heard *these things*, **our** hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: **for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.**

The scripture records that the king and his men intended to destroy the spies and take their stand against God and His people. They knew that God had given the land to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob. They recognized God as LORD. One can't help but wonder what would have happened had they chosen to demonstrate belief in God and surrender.

Rahab is a wonderful demonstration of faith in choosing to go against the crowd and act according to the truth and what is right. More often than not, yielding to peer pressure and going along with the crowd result in disappointment rather than happiness and bondage rather than freedom.

Scripture tells us that Rahab was a harlot (Joshua 2:1). She is another beautiful example of God's grace and mercy. Her faith, as in the life of every believer, was evidenced by repentance and a complete change in her way of life. God didn't hold Rahab's past against her; her ability to serve God wasn't limited because of it. Scripture records that she is one of the ancestors of Christ Jesus.

Matt. 1:5-6 & 16 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king...And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

What an amazing example of encouragement to anyone of God's unconditional love.

Heb. 11:32 ¶ And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

Heb. 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

Heb. 11:34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

At this point the writer begins to reference a general grouping of men of faith that was evidenced by mighty deeds.

Gideon's story is recorded in Judges 6-8. He is widely known for his use of a fleece in attaining affirmation of his understanding of God's will. God used Gideon and his army of 300 (reduced from 22,000) to deliver Israel from the Midianites and Amalekites. Gideon is a great encouragement to those of us who are hesitant to step out in faith without multiple affirmations that it is God's will

for us to do so. Once he did step out, however, he kept moving forward in faith and obedience; he didn't decide to turn tail and run even when God's instruction went against all logic and reason.

Barak led the army of Israel in defeat of the armies of Jabin, the king of Hazor in Canaan. (This account is found in Judges 4-5.) That the Lord singled Barak out for his faith is very thought-provoking, since the scripture records that he refused to go out to battle without Deborah, the prophetess who was serving as judge in Israel at that time. Barak was getting his instruction through Deborah, and I think her willingness to go with him affirmed to him that her instruction was from God. Though she told him that he would be upstaged by a woman in defeating Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, it did not deter him from obeying God's instruction. Barak was more concerned about accomplishing God's will than in gaining personal glory. That should be the mindset of every person of faith today, especially those in leadership in the church.

Samson (whose life is recorded in Judges 13-16) is next on the list. Most of the scriptural record about Samson is less than positive. Although separated from birth to be bound to the Nazarite vow, he ignores his vow, he is prideful and he is ruled by the lust of the flesh. Still, he serves to protect Israel from the Philistines for a time and eventually proves his faith in God in acting to bring judgment upon the Philistines knowing that he would die in the process. Samson is another prime example of God's unconditional love. In spite of Samson's very poor testimony of obedience to God, he apparently never lost faith in God. Instead of refusing to hear Samson's prayer, God chose to respond to Samson's faith as he called out his prayer. It's also interesting to note that Samson's motive as recorded in Judges was to get vengeance for being blinded. I believe God answered that prayer so as to declare Himself in contrast to Dagon, the false god of the Philistines. Samson was recognized as God's representative; therefore, the honor of God's name was at stake in connection with Samson's actions. Though he had failed God miserably in many ways in his life (according to the record), Samson was a bold declaration of the power of Almighty God in death. Isn't it sad that so often it takes suffering to put us in position to best honor the Lord?

Jephthae was yet another judge of Israel whom God used to deliver his people from an enemy, the Ammonites. (See Judges 11-12) He is most known for his rash vow to sacrifice the first one to come out to meet him when he came home from victory—and it turned out to be his daughter, his only child. God chooses to single out Jephthae for his faith in God in deliverance of God's people—not for his foolish vow. I admit that his story poses more questions, but I am not going to let that distract me at this point. Jephthae's faith resulted in action based on the revealed word of God and is a wonderful example of the victory that can be ours any time we step out in faith in God's word. If only the leaders of Israel had the same faith in God that Jephthae had regarding their right to the land today and his desire to give it back to them if they would but follow Him in faith and obedience. I believe that day is coming sooner rather than later.

It's interesting to me that David is only mentioned as part of a group and not singled out. Scripture records much about the life of David, and how he was chosen by God to be the royal progenitor of Jesus Christ. This whole chapter again gives example to how God's ways are so different from our own. I am sure I would have made a different list according to my reading of scripture, and David would have been prominent on that list. David is described as a man after God's own heart, yet he is just one of many in this listing of people of faith. The grouping in this verse is one of men of might and valor, and we know more of David's exploits than of any of the others. This reference to David should serve to remind leaders in the church today that they are one among many and that their function in God's overall plan, while more visible, is according to God's choice and gifting and not because they are more worthy than those with seemingly minor roles in that plan. David is a wonderful example of encouragement to believers that, in spite of falling into terrible sin, one can be forgiven and still be recognized as a mighty person of faith and honor before God.

Samuel seems a bit out of place in this list. I think Samuel is singled out as the first of the major prophets of God to minister to the nation of Israel, but he also served as a judge. As I reviewed the story of Samuel, I was reminded how he led the people in sacrifice and prayer to defeat the Philistines through their faith in God. I am also reminded how Samuel boldly confronted King Saul when he disobeyed God's instruction and stepped in to slay Agag, the king of the Amalekites, whose life Saul had recklessly and disobediently spared. Samuel was not intimidated by Israel's earthly king; he was intent on faithfully serving their heavenly King. He is another example of the importance of leading through faith and submission to God as LORD.

The reference to the "prophets" certainly includes many wonderful men of faith that I would have thought would have been singled out—Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, to name a few. The writer gives the disclaimer of not having the time to do justice to all those deserving of reference in this "honor roll" of people of faith. After singling out a few, he proceeds to make reference to their actions of faith that were deserving of mention.

- They conquered kingdoms. – e.g., Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Solomon
- They worked righteousness. – e.g., Elijah, Elisha, Samuel, Isaiah and all the prophets
- They received what was promised. – e.g., Caleb, Gideon, Jephthae, David
- They stopped the mouths of lions. – e.g., Samson, David, Daniel
- They quenched the violence of fire. – e.g., Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego
- They escaped the edge of the sword. – e.g., Elijah, Elisha, David
- They had their weakness turned to strength. – e.g., Abraham, Sarah, Samson, Gideon
- They grew mighty in battle and routed foreign armies. – e.g., Joshua, Gideon, Jephthae, David, Solomon

Heb. 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

Heb. 11:36 And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

Heb. 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

Heb. 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.

The list continues in reference to victories gained through unnamed people of faith. (Some of these examples are taken from *Ecclesiastical History*, by Eusebius, and *Fox's Book of Martyrs*. As such, they are not the ones being referenced by the writer, but who nevertheless qualify because of their actions.)

- Women received back their dead through resurrection to life. – e.g., the widow of Zarephath, Mary & Martha
- Others endured torture rather than compromise their convictions for deliverance because they were focused on eternal reward. – e.g., Agapius, Alpheus, Apollonia, Origen, Polycarp
- Others endured mockings, scourgings, and imprisonment. – e.g., Jeremiah, Peter, Paul
- Others were stoned, sawn asunder, and killed with the sword. – e.g., Stephen, Isaiah, James (the brother of John)
- Others wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins while suffering due to physical needs, persecution and mistreatment. – e.g. – Elijah, John the Baptist
- Others wandered in deserts, mountains, dens and caves. – Moses, Elijah, David, John the Baptist

“were tempted” – This Greek for this phrase makes reference to testing and examination. I think this would be applicable to all those mentioned in this chapter. The faith of each one was tested and proven to be genuine.

“of whom the world was not worthy” – As he closes his list, the writer makes a point of noting that these people of faith were worthy of more than this world ever afforded them. All of this was, of course, allowed under God’s sovereign hand of authority. I believe they all had the mindset of the Apostle Paul as expressed in his letter to the Romans.

Rom. 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Heb. 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

Heb. 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

As the writer closes this chapter, he makes a point of noting that all these people singled out for their faith died without having received “the promise.” I believe this to be a reference to resurrection to a glorified body and eternal life with the Father. In God’s sovereign plan He has determined that people of faith under

both the old and new covenants until the return of the Savior will be resurrected together. Well, this just adjusted my thinking regarding the resurrections as I have been taught. In looking over my notes on my topical study of this subject, I realized I again had made assumption according to previous teaching without really opening my eyes to possible error. I think most assume that the Old Testament saints will be resurrected after the tribulation because of their reading of Daniel 12:1-2. In reading it with new eyes, I now see that the reading allows for their inclusion in the rapture of the body of believers. They are the dead "in Christ" (cf 1Thessalonians 4:16) just as surely as are those in the church, since He is the person through whom all men of faith were redeemed.

I don't feel like I can leave this chapter without commenting on the fact that though many in this list did not experience physical lack or suffering for a good portion if not all of their lives, many more experienced great suffering, ridicule and death because of their faith. That is not a truth that one will hear from the prosperity and seeker sensitive preachers that are most prominent in the church today. The truth is that scripture teaches that the person of faith will suffer tribulation in this world.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Phil. 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

2Tim. 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

1Pet. 1:6-7 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

1Pet. 2:20 For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God.

1Pet. 4:12-13 & 16 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy....Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

I believe that there are many who struggle to grow in faith because of unrealistic expectation as taught by irresponsible and/or false teachers.