

Walking by Faith

[Hebrews 11:1-6](#)

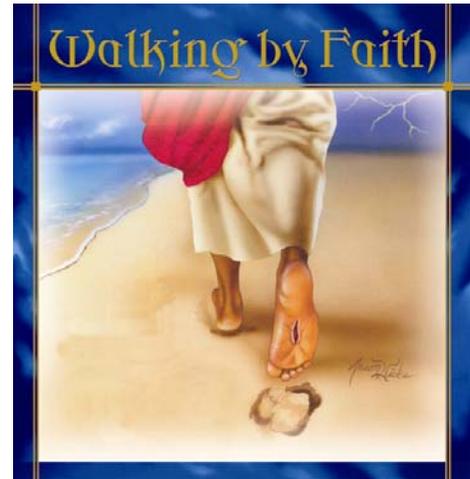


This is probably the most famous chapter in the book of Hebrews, it has been called "The Great Faith Chapter". It is evident that the 11th chapter is but a continuation of the teaching and instruction developed in the closing section of chapter 10.

Hebrews 10:38 (NKJV) *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."*

The "*just*" is referring to believers; we as Christians are to live by faith. This 11th chapter is not an explanation of how to be saved. It is rather a call to perseverance in faith, whatever the odds. In this chapter we have an extended list of examples of Old Testament men and women who lived by faith in the midst of great persecution and tribulation.

Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV) *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*



We said last week that this is not a definition of faith. Faith strictly defined is understanding and assent to a proposition. Faith begins with knowledge; you can't believe what you don't know. There must be some propositional knowledge of the object to whom your faith focuses. Then you must assent that the knowledge is true. It's one thing to have knowledge, yet it's something else to believe it. I know a lot of things that I don't believe.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for" - Faith is viewed here as related to hope, and hope has necessarily to do with things unseen and future:

Romans 8:24 (NKJV) *For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?*

Hope reinforces the present by the prospect of the future. A Navy wife is supported in solitude and adversity by the hope that her husband will return. Similarly the Christian is saved from despair and apostasy by hope. And faith is the basis of hope.

The word "substance" is from the Greek word *hupostasis* [υπο/στας], which is made up of "*stasis*" meaning: "*to stand*", and "*hupo*" meaning: "*under*" - thus that which stands under, a foundation. Thus it speaks of the ground on which one builds a hope. *Hupostasis* could also be translated: "*confident assurance*" in the sense of:

Hebrews 3:14 (NKJV) *For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,*

Or the "*hupostasis*" could be translated: "*guarantee*" - this usage has led some to suggest the translation: "*faith is the title deed of things hoped for.*"

All of these translations give a shade of meaning. Faith is a foundation to our hopes, it is a guarantee. Faith is of such a nature that it turns those things which are yet future into present realities. So certain, so sure are we that we shall receive what God has promised that it is as though they are already real. Faith gives us assurance—because faith is the persuasion not only that there are blessings, but faith is persuaded that the blessings are ours. We said last week that assurance is an inseparable part of saving faith.

The verse goes on to say that faith is, "*the evidence of things not seen.*" This doesn't expand or add to what has already been said but it confirms it. The assurance or foundation or guarantee spoken of in the first part of the verse is now termed evidence or conviction and the things hoped for are precisely the things not seen. Though the blessings promised are not yet revealed, the man of faith is convinced of their reality. This same conviction caused Paul to make the confident calculation that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

We hope, because we believe. Hope vanishes if faith ceases. Faith is the foundation, assurance, guarantee, conviction of things hoped for. Faith is the basis of hope, but what is the basis of faith? What warrant have we for believing what we believe? The basis of faith is a **promise** of some person considered dependable.

It was such a hope as to the future, a hope set on Christ as the coming one, that the first readers of this letter needed to have rekindled in their hearts to guard them from apostasy:

Hebrews 10:37 (NKJV) *For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

The writer now recounts selected examples of what faith had already enabled men of like passions to do or to bear:

Hebrews 11:2 (NKJV) *For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.*

"For by it"—faith—the elders obtained a good report. The word "report" is from the Greek word *martureo* [martureō], which means: "*to receive praise or to receive approval.*" The Old Testament saints, named here in chapter 11, were praised or approved by God, because they lived by faith. The faith these Old Testament saints demonstrated was a strong faith - thus giving glory to God and receiving his approval:

Hebrews 11:3 (NKJV) *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.*

What is this verse speaking of? Is this a reference to:

Genesis 1:1 (NKJV) *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Most people see Hebrews 11:3 as speaking of the physical creation. That Jesus Christ—the Word—is the agent of creation there should be no doubt, the Scripture clearly teaches this:

John 1:3 (NKJV) *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

Colossians 1:16 (NKJV) *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*

If you don't recognize God as the creator, then you have problems trying to explain how this universe came into being.

Where did it all come from? Who made it? It can't be an accident. Someone made it, and the Bible tells us it was Jesus Christ. He is the Creator. Jesus has the ability to create, and that set Him apart from men. Only God can create, and that Jesus Christ creates indicates that He is God and establishes His absolute superiority over angels and the prophets.

So, Jesus Christ clearly created the world, but when the writer of Hebrews says, "*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God*", he is not talking about the creation of the universe. The Greek word used here for "worlds" is *aion* [aiōn]. *Aion* is properly a "*designation of time, an age*", and it is doubtful whether it ever has any other signification in the New Testament. This word is never used of the

physical creation. The proper word for the earth, or world, is *kosmos* [ko/smov], [kos'-mos], which is used to designate both the material and the moral world. "*The world or universe*".

We can see the distinction of these two words in:

Hebrews 9:26 (NKJV) *He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; (kosmos) but now, once at the end of the ages (aion), He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

In speaking of "*the foundation of the world*" he is speaking of the beginning of the physical world, the creation. But when he says, "*the end of the ages*" he is referring to the ages of the Old and New Covenants. The writer of Hebrews has already taught us this in:

Hebrews 1:2 (NKJV) *has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds (aion);*

The phrase, "*by whom he made the worlds.*" "By" is better translated "through." The word "worlds" is not *kosmos*, but *aion*, which means: "*the ages.*" His discussion here involves the Old and New Covenant ages. It is these two ages that are contrasted throughout this book. He consistently shows how the New Covenant is superior to the Old. He is not only the cause of the "ages," but he is the reason for which they were created. The author uses the normal Greek word for "worlds" in verse 6:

Hebrews 1:6 (NKJV) *But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."*

But in [Hebrews 1:2](#), and in [11:3](#) he uses the Greek word for "ages". The Bible only speaks of two ages, the Old Covenant age and the New Covenant age.

To the Jews, time was divided into two great periods, the Mosaic Age and the Messianic Age. The Messiah was viewed as one who would bring in a new world. The period of the Messiah was, therefore, correctly characterized by the Synagogue as "*the world to come.*" All through the New Testament we see two ages in contrast: "This age" and the "age to come":

Matthew 12:32 (NKJV) *"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to [mello] come.*

The word "come" at the end of the verse is the Greek word *mello* [mell | w], which means: "*about to be or to be about.*" We could translate this, "the age about to come" (in the first century).

Ephesians 1:21 (NKJV) *far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to [mello] come.*

Here again, we see the two ages. So, the New Testament speaks of two ages, "*this age*" and "*the age to come.*" The understanding of these two ages, and when they changed, is fundamental to interpreting the Bible.

So, in Hebrews 11:3 the author is not referring to the creation of the world but of the ages. He had just said in 10:37, "*For yet a very, very little while, and He that shall come will come.*" They knew that the coming of Christ and the changing of the ages were synonymous. He says, "*the worlds were framed by the word of God*" -The word "framed" is the Greek word *katartizo* [katartizw]. This word is most often translated as "*perfected or made complete*". Thus, "the ages were perfected by the word of God."

Hebrews 11:4 (NKJV) *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.*

"By faith"—now introduces the first of a series of illustrations from the personal history of particular individuals who belong to the lineage of men and women of faith.

Abel—the writer begins at the beginning of human history with the first two men born to our first parents. Abel was the first man of faith. Abel was born outside Eden, so he never had the opportunity to know God in the personal way that his parents had.

Genesis 4:1-7 (NKJV) *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." ² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 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. 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."*

These two boys bring an offering to God, one is accepted and one is rejected. Why? The writer of Hebrews tells us that Abel's sacrifice was *"more excellent"* - this is from the Greek word *pleion* [po|u/v], which means: *"greater or more important sacrifice."* Why was Abel's sacrifice better? It was better because it was offered in faith. That is the thrust of the entire chapter. The thing that sets these brothers apart is faith!

To do something by faith you must do it in response to and according to a word from God. It was by faith because he brought it in response to God's Word. He must have believed something that God had revealed to him.

Genesis 4:3 (NKJV) *And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.*

The phrase *"in the process of time it came to pass"*—is literally rendered: *"at the end of days"*—in other words, at the end of a prescribed time. God must have revealed a special day to sacrifice. I think this is also indicated by the fact that they both came at the same time and they both seemingly had information regarding the sacrifice. What did God tell them? They had a promise of a coming redeemer:

Genesis 3:15 (NKJV) *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

And in Genesis 3:21 God brought in death:

Genesis 3:21 (NKJV) *Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

Animals were sacrificed to cover Adam and Eve's sin. Adam and Eve must have taught their children that "spiritual death" was a result of sin. Have you taught your children this? And by faith in God's provision Able offered a sacrifice:

Genesis 4:4 (NKJV) *Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,*

The separate mention of the "fat" tells us that the lamb had been slain.

It was not intrinsic merit in the firstling of the flock above the fruit of the ground. It was faith in God's appointed means that made the difference. The sacrifice implied an acknowledgment of his own desert of death and a confession that he believed that the death of an innocent substitute would be accepted by God for his own deliverance from the judgment of sin.

Abel understood one of the greatest truths a man can know. Abel understood the way in which it is necessary to approach God. He understood that God is approached only through faith.

There are a lot of people today who think they can approach God like Cain did and they bring to God their good works. What are you trusting for your salvation? Abel illustrates to us the way of faith, we can only approach God through faith in person and work of Jesus Christ

[Hebrews 11:4](#) goes on to say, *"through which he obtained witness that he was righteous"*. What is the antecedent of *"through which"*? It is not "sacrifice", but "faith". It was through his faith that he was righteous. The word *"righteous"* is from the Greek word *dikaïos* [δικαίος] meaning . This might refer to his personal righteousness, but in light of [Hebrews 10:38](#) it most likely refers to his *"position before God."*

The readers too can be assured of God's acceptance of the Greater sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and are justified on the basis of their faith in that. The Able illustration points to the beginning point of the Christian life. It all begins with faith!

Hebrews 11:4 says that Able *"obtained witness"*. How did this happen? Jewish tradition says by God sending down fire to consume the sacrifice. There are at least five other occasions when God showed His approval by fire; [Lev. 9:24](#), [Judges 6:21](#), [1 Kings 18:38](#), [1 Chron. 21:26](#), and [2 Chron. 7:1](#). However the attestation took place, it is obvious that God honored it and accepted it, because it was offered in faith.

Hebrews 11:4 goes on to say, *"and through it he being dead still speaks"* —"through it" is again a reference to faith. Abel's life is a memorial to the supreme reality that God is approached only by faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ:

John 14:6 (NKJV) *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

Acts 4:12 (NKJV) *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

Enoch

Hebrews 11:5 (NKJV) *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.*

Abel showed us the way of faith; Enoch shows us the walk of faith. The example of Enoch looks especially at the life of fellowship. In its essence it is a life of walking with God, pleasing Him, until Christ translates us into the spiritual realm—heaven.

Genesis 5:18-24 (NKJV) *Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch. ¹⁹ After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters. ²⁰ So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died. ²¹ Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. ²² After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. ²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

Notice that verse 22 says, *"after he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God"*—this turn in his life was a result of faith, and since faith always requires a word from God to rest upon, it confirms the idea that Enoch was given a revelation of a coming judgment which changed his life. The name "Methuselah" means: *"when he dies, judgment or his death shall send."* (muth, a root that means "death"⁵ ; and from shalach, which means "to bring," or "to send forth." Thus, the name Methuselah signifies, "his death shall bring.")

Genesis says Enoch walked with God, Hebrews says that he pleased God. Walking with God is living in fellowship or communion with Him:

1 John 1:3-7 (NKJV) *that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. ⁵ This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

As we "*walk in the light*"— living in submission to the Word of God, holy living, we have fellowship with God. God doesn't walk in fellowship with those who are living in sin (verse 6).

Pleasing God, walking with God is equivalent to walking in the Spirit. It's a Spirit controlled, not a flesh controlled, life. Enoch walked in fellowship with God, his life pleased God and God removed him from the earth without him dying. Where did Enoch go? Did God take him right to heaven? No!

John 3:13 (NKJV) *"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.*

Prior to the completion of redemption at [AD 70](#), nobody went to heaven.

This text doesn't tell us what kind of father Enoch was or anything about his testimony at work. It doesn't say how he spent his leisure time or how he treated his wife—it just says that he pleased God. But that really answers all the other questions, doesn't it! A man who walks with God is going to be the kind of father he should be; he's going to honor his wife, and be a servant leader to her; his leisure time is going to be spent in those things that are pleasing to the Lord. His testimony at work will be consistent and God honoring. He really didn't need to say anything more about Enoch, he said he pleased God, and that says it all. What a testimony, he pleased God! How did he please God? It wasn't by his works, but by Faith!

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) *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.*

Now the writer lays down an axiomatic truth. He uses the aorist tense in the infinitive "to please". The idea is, "without faith it is impossible to please Him at all." The statement is universal in its application and timeless.

The particular example of Enoch illustrates the general principle now propounded. Faith is trustful reliance to the sovereign word of God and a confident recognition of complete trustworthiness of His promises.

As the account of the fall in Genesis 3 shows, the failure of faith manifests itself in rebellion against God's authority, questioning of his goodness and denial of the truth of His word. To abandon faith is to behave as though God were not there.

Verse six says, "*for he who comes to God must believe that He is*"—the word "comes" is from the Greek word *proserchomai* [proserchomai], it is used in [Hebrews 4:16](#), [7:25](#), [10:1](#) and [22](#) of one who comes near in worship. "*Must believe that He is*"—it is not belief in the existence of a god that is meant, but belief in the existence of *the God of the Bible*. It is belief in the God who is Holy, Just, Good, Love, Mercy, Wrath, Sovereign. It is a belief in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to draw near to God in worship, we must believe He is who He says He is. God is immutable, He never changes and we can trust what He says, and who He is.

Verse six goes on to say, "*and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*" In this epistle there is a great deal said about rewards, and the reason is that the emphasis is on the Christian life. There is a reward for living a life of faith. Do you believe this? Do you believe that God rewards those who diligently seek Him? Do you diligently seek Him? Why not? Is it that you don't want to be rewarded or is it that you don't believe Him? Do you think the reward is greater from the world?

Notice how God is to be sought—diligently. This has the idea of seeking to know Him in an intimate way. Walking with God is rewarded both temporally and eternally. The story of [Jehoshaphat](#) in 2 Chron. 20 is an excellent illustration of what it is to walk by faith. It shows us how the Christian life is to be lived:

2 Chronicles 20:1-26 (NKJV) *It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat. ² Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is En Gedi). ³ And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. ⁵ Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, ⁶ and said: "O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? ⁷ "Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? ⁸ "And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying,*

⁹ 'If disaster comes upon us; sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine; we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.' ¹⁰ "And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir; whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them; ¹¹ "here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. ¹² "O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You." ¹³ Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the LORD.

¹⁴ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. ¹⁵ And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's." ¹⁶ "Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ 'You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you."

¹⁸ And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. ¹⁹ Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high. ²⁰ So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." ²¹ And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, For His mercy endures forever." ²² Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. ²³ For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

²⁴ So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped. ²⁵ When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on the dead bodies, and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil because there was so much. ²⁶ And on the fourth day they

assembled in the Valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the LORD; therefore the name of that place was called The Valley of Berachah until this day.

That is what the Christian life is all about - trusting God.

[Ann Sullivan](#) was born in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts in poverty and in affliction, and she was also half blind. When her mother died, she went over the hill to the poor house. But later at the Perkins institute for the blind an operation restored her sight and from that day on she devoted herself to the care of the blind.



Meanwhile a baby was born in the south, a little girl, who after early childhood would never hear or speak or see, her name was [Helen Keller](#). And in due time Helen came under the care of Ann Sullivan. In two weeks Ann taught her thirty words just by spelling them out by touching her hand. And under the tutelage of Ann, Helen rose to national prominence and fame. Teacher and pupil became companions, and they were inseparable until the day of Ann Sullivan's death.

In her darkness, Helen had found a companion who could teach her and whom she could trust. And, believer, if you really want it you can have a companion along the pathway of life, and though you cannot see Him, you can trust Him, and He can teach you and be with you. And by faith you can walk with God and please God, for without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Psalms 9:10 (NKJV) *And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.*

To know God's name is to know Him in an intimate personal way. Do you have such a relationship with God and such a confidence in Him that you believe He is with you in your adversity even though you do not see any evidence of His presence and His power? Do you trust Him? God wants our trust. Without faith it is impossible to please Him.

This message preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on October 28, 2001. [Tape #221](#).



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