

## FAITH IN THE WORD

### Hebrews 11:1-16

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 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.

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 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. 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. 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. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

We have considered time and again, the words of the Apostle Paul, in speaking to his spiritual son Timothy, in his second letter, or epistle to him, where he tells him and us, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be **complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**" The Scriptures or Holy Scriptures, and is what we now refer to also as the Holy

Bible, is also referred to as the Word of God. It has stood the test of time and has endured for 2000 years, give or take some years based on whether we are referring to an Old Testament book or a New Testament book. Nevertheless, we have an incredibly precious gift given to us by our Maker, our God, our Heavenly Father. The Word of God. We are then putting our hope, and trust, and faith, in the Word of God just as those that are spoken of in our passage of Scripture for today in Hebrews 11.

There is certainly room for discussion about the translation of phrases and words, and some are undoubtedly more close to the inspired meaning, yet it can hardly be argued about who and what we are putting our faith in, and of what are the promises of God. It is quite clear from the Word of God that we are putting our faith in Christ Jesus and that we are instructed by God through His Word to live in and according to His Righteousness, as a child of God. Our hope and trust is in the one true God, and He is the Creator of all things. It is that God that Isaiah the prophet quotes saying, "Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it." (**Isaiah 42:5**) He is the one and only Creator of all things and the one who has made us a living soul, giving us a mind to reason, and a heart to feel and express emotion, and a spirit that has always been intended to live forever in God's eternal kingdom. Listen then to what Isaiah quotes of God's Word next, "I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as **a covenant to the people**, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. I am the Lord [YHWH or Yehowa], that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." (**Isaiah 42:6-9**) He of course, is prophesying of Christ Jesus, and He has now been revealed to us, according to the New Covenant in Christ Jesus. Indeed a light is shining for us to believe on and receive Christ Jesus, as we are seeing a great light! (Spiritually speaking) That as well then, is another great gift we have been given by God, our Creator and the Sustainer of all things. The Word of God that became flesh, as the Apostle John explains, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (**John 1:1-5**) "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will

of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (**John 1:10-14**)

Matthew, also called Levi, who was a tax collector and a disciple of Christ's, wrote for us in what we have as the first book of the New Testament, the gospel according to Matthew, he quoted Isaiah the prophet, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." (**Matthew 4:15-16**) Right after those verses Matthew states, "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."** (**Matthew 4:17**) Tying that all together, from the prophecies of Isaiah to the words of Christ, that a light is shining right now in the darkness and we are told that God is calling us to a life of righteousness, in Christ Jesus, and therefore to repent. The Old Testament word generally used for the word "repent" is "nacham" (nawcham).<sup>1</sup> It basically has a meaning of deeply sighing in sorrow, but it also has a secondary connotation of there being another person involved to which one is sorry to or for. For us, in reference to our repenting to God, God is that other person that we are repenting to. Once again, the Greek word in the New Testament used for the word repent is the word metanoeo. It means to recognize a need for change, hence the sighing and sorrow, which is what the meta part means, and then heeding to that need for change, which is the noeo part, which means we are turning to God for that needed change which is His Righteousness, in Christ Jesus.

That is where the Apostle Paul mentioned four essentials that are needed for us as we are turning to God, as we are coming out of the darkness and into His marvelous light. (**1 Peter 2:9**) Those four things Paul speaks of in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, are what we obtain from God through Christ Jesus. 1. His Wisdom, 2. Righteousness, 3. Sanctification, and 4. His Redemption. That, brothers and sisters in Christ, are what WE have our hope in, live by faith in, and put our trust in God for. That process is nicely summarized by Paul in **Ephesians 2:8-10**, "For by grace you have been saved through **faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Our faith, hinging on our trusting God at His Word, as He calls us out of the darkness and into His light, we are just walking in it (His promises), and He will make it happen. The Apostle Paul also spoke to the folks at Philippi saying essentially that, "I thank my

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<sup>1</sup> Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, **for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now**, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (**Philippians 1:3-6**) Paul therefore recognized their faith. Our faith, that could be said is on the hinge that opens the door for us into God's eternal kingdom and glory is made up of...the love of God. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (**John 3:16-17**) That hinge then could be said to be the love of God and the door is...Jesus tells us, "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (**John 10:8-10**)

For our passage of Scripture for today in **Hebrews 11**, I didn't include all of the people mentioned from the Old Testament that were included in that chapter. On your own time I hope you will read through the whole chapter and even the following chapter, chapter 12, as it summarizes again for us our calling that is in Christ Jesus. After mentioning many of the men and women of faith in the Old Testament, in **Hebrews 11**, the writer(s) of Hebrews starts chapter 12 saying, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let **US** lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus [for His Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption and that we should then walk in that], the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:1-2**)

**Hebrews 11** begins saying, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 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." We are ultimately hoping for eternal life in Christ Jesus, that is, those who have believed on and received Christ by being born-again, as the Apostle John explains to us, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (**John 1:12-13**) But also, in Christ Jesus, we are reconciled to God, to have a right relationship with Him, as we have become a child of God. Our faith is NOT just based on the grasping of man to find what we hope is God, that we are just trying to explain our existence

and our future, according to our carnal or human rationalizations. There are several evidences that can be considered in our faith in God and His promises. 1. The Word of God tells us God's plan for us. 2. The testimony of others, that great cloud of witnesses that we can read about in the Bible, as well as those who are still present, and then 3. as the Apostle Paul tells us in **Romans 8:16-17**, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

That doesn't make all of the grief and sorrows of this life fade away. While our sighing to God in sorrow and looking to Him for a needed change through Christ Jesus, will certainly change us, the rest of the world isn't all on the same page. Unfortunately, I'm sure, at the great sadness of Christ as well as His true believers, many wars and evils have been done in the name of religion. Yet the fullness of the doctrine of Christ, of which we are called to (**2 John 1:9**), is of what Jesus said was the great commandment and the second that is like unto it. We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and then also to love our neighbors as ourselves (as God loves them and us). (**Mark 12:30-31**) Our faith doesn't hinge on whether God will take away the problems of this world in our desired time, but on His time, as He is perfect in all His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and His Works (**Deuteronomy 32:4**). That will lead us to sighing and sorrow for those who have not yet come out of that darkness and into His marvelous light.

When we are confused and troubled by what we see and experience around us, it can get disconcerting when we try to put God on our timeframe and according to our desires. Our Scripture in Hebrews 11, after mentioning some of those who walked by faith, says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them."

The Apostle Paul addressed that mindset saying in **Colossians 3:1-4**, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." That of course doesn't mean that we **just** sit at home and just meditate on what heaven will be like. It does mean for us though that we are always

looking to God through Christ Jesus in prayer and in His Word. As our Scripture in Hebrews 11 tells us, "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." Hopefully then, as we are loving God wholeheartedly and loving others, our mindset about those rewards are for us to be blessed by God so that we may be a blessing to God and to other people. Also, our heavenly hope then, is not just for ourselves but for those who are put in our path in life, that is, friends, family, co-workers, and those who could use someone to be praying for them.

Once again, there is One who is perfect, and He is our Lord, God, and Savior. We all then need prayer, so please be praying for one another. As James, the brother of Jesus tells us, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." That healing isn't always a physical healing that is needed. It may be an emotional healing, having a broken heart or spirit. It can be a healing of our hope that is in Christ, so that we will overcome this world and all of its evil, and that we can live an abundant and victorious life in Christ Jesus.