

Praying Hebrews 11

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(This week's readings from Sunday to Sunday: Hebrews 6–13)

Hebrews 11 (ESV)

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. **2** For by it the people of old received their commendation. **3** By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. **5** By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. **6** And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. **7** By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. **9** By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. **10** For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. **11** By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. **12** Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. **14** For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. **15** If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. **16** But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, **18** of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." **19** He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. **20** By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. **21** By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of

Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. **22** By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. **24** By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, **25** choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. **26** He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. **27** By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. **28** By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

29 By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. **30** By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. **31** By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

32 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— **33** who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, **34** quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. **35** Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. **36** Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. **37** They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— **38** of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, **40** since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Adoration

Though Hebrews 11 is about faith in many ways, one of the most repeated words in Hebrews 11 is "God." Our God is actively at work in the lives of his people. The historical events referenced in Hebrews 11 are memorable because of God's supernatural power. Let's begin our time of prayer today by celebrating the God of our faith. Generations of people, for thousands of years, have turned to the living God, the God of Hebrews 11, and worshiped him. Give God glory by declaring out loud how wonderful, majestic, and mighty he truly is.

[Pray for 7 seconds.]

Hebrews 11:3 proclaims that “the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” In your own words, adore God for creating everything out of nothing.

[Pray for 7 seconds.]

Hebrews 11 describes Abraham’s faith in verses 8-10, saying that Abraham “obeyed when he was called to go out ... not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” Worship God in your own words for giving us something to look forward to during our days on this earth—an eternal dwelling place with God. Praise God that he is the designer and builder of our heavenly home, the eternal city.

[Pray for 7 seconds.]

According to Hebrews 11:16, when we come to God in faith and “desire a better country, ... God is not ashamed to be called [our] God.” Lift your voice and worship God, that he allows us to have a relationship with him, that he is forevermore OUR God.

[Pray for 7 seconds.]

Lord, you are our Creator. You are the Alpha (the beginning) and Omega (the end).¹ You made something out of nothing. Our human eyes have never witnessed such creative acts. We stand in awe of your majestic power. You are truly holy, for there is no one like you. ALL things were made through you, and without you, nothing was made.² God, you have given us divine hope for our present, and eternal hope for our future. Our relationship with you is the greatest gift we could ever receive. It is truly amazing to be loved by you. Thank you for calling us your people and for being our God.

Confession

“Faith” is one of the most common words in Hebrews 11, and one of the most common phrases is “by faith.” The repetition of this phrase issues a call for God’s people to continue to walk by faith, in every area of our lives. In what ways have you stopped living by faith? What is the Spirit bringing to mind right now? Confess any areas of doubt, temptation, or weakness to God. Confess it as a sin. And ask the Lord to stir in you, again today, a heart of great faith in him.

[Pray for 10 seconds.]

Hebrews 11:1 explains our faith as “the assurance of things hoped for,” and “the conviction of things not seen.” This explanation of faith should caution us to not place our faith in what we

¹ Rev 21:6.

² John 1:3.

see, but in our God who is unseen. Take some time and confess to God our dependence on the earthly things we can see—things like material possessions, money, and accomplishments.

[Pray for 10 seconds.]

Hebrews 11:25 tells us that Moses chose “... to be mistreated with the people of God [rather than] ... enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.” In what ways have you enjoyed the fleeting pleasures of sin lately? Confess these sinful pleasures out loud to God in your own words, and ask God to turn your heart back to him in repentance.

[Pray for 10 seconds.]

Also speaking of the faith of Moses, Hebrews 11:26 says, “He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.” Do you cherish the wealth that God has given to us in Christ, or is your heart preoccupied with worldly treasures? Take a moment to repent of specific sins—perhaps covetousness, greed, jealousy, or ungratefulness. Confess your sins aloud to God, and ask him to give us eyes to see what we have in Christ as the ultimate reward and greater wealth than the treasures of this world.

[Pray for 10 seconds.]

Thank you Jesus for showing us how to overcome the temptations of Satan.³ You trusted God and his Word more than your own eyes and experience. Lord, we confess that we grow discontent with your Word and your presence. Sometimes we feel we need more, but we now declare that your Word is inexhaustible and life-sustaining. God, we confess that we allow the fear of missing out to cloud our minds from the faith of being known by you. Father, please forgive us for testing you with our doubts, when we should be testing our faith by doubting our doubts and not leaning on our own understanding.⁴ God, we admit that our faithlessness is displeasing to you. Yet, you proudly call us your people.⁵ Father, we want to please you with our faith and our trust, in you and your Word. Give us the grace today to rely completely upon your Spirit, your guidance, your strength, your ability, your wisdom—all of which are rewards of your grace and mercy.

Thanksgiving

In Hebrews 11, God’s people do extraordinary things, by faith, because our God is an extra-ordinary God. Abraham traveled to an unknown land. Sarah, though she was barren, conceived a child. Moses and the Israelites crossed the Red Sea as on dry land. Others enforced justice, stopped the mouth of lions, put armies to flight, and received back their dead

³ Matt 4:1–11.

⁴ Prov 3:5.

⁵ Heb 11:16.

from resurrection, according to Hebrews 11, verses 33–35. Thank God out loud for the ways that he has displayed his surpassing power in the lives and circumstances of his people.

[Pray for 10 seconds.]

Hebrews 11 reminds us in verse 6 that God “rewards those who seek him.” Thank God for his desire to reward our faith and for the many ways that he rewards his people. Thank him for sending his Spirit to help us in our times of need, and for rewarding us with the gift of his Son.

[Pray for 15 seconds.]

Raise your voice and thank God for examples of faith—those in Hebrews 11 who have gone before us like Cain, Enoch, Sarah, Rahab, Issac, Gideon, Barak, Samson, David, and Samuel, and all the believers in your life who boldly placed their trust in God despite their circumstances. Express your gratitude to God, in your own words, for such examples of faith.

[Pray for 15 seconds.]

Supplication

In every example of Hebrews 11, God is the giver of faith. And these examples of faith call us to greater faith in God and in his everlasting kingdom. As Jesus told his disciples in Mark 11, verses 22–24, “Have faith in God. ... [W]hatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Ask God the Father with boldness to give you the type of faith that moves mountains.

[Pray for 10 seconds.]

What do you need to ask of God in prayer today? Ask, do not doubt, and believe that it will come to pass in Jesus’s name.

[Pray for 10 seconds.]

Ask God to reveal himself and give faith to someone you know that is beginning to doubt God’s existence and that God rewards those who seek him.

[Pray for 10 seconds.]

Hebrews 11 describes generations of faith and faithfulness to God. Ask God to give us faith in our generation, that we would bring God glory in the example we set for future generations. And pray for future generations of Christians in our communities to follow Christ by faith.

[Pray for 10 seconds.]

Benediction

Gracious Father, great giver of gifts and giver of faith, we come to you with the words of Hebrews 12:1–3.⁶ Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, we ask that you would let us lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely. May we run with endurance the race that you have set before us. Keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Always, at all times, and in all circumstances, may we consider Jesus, who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that we may not grow weary or fainthearted.

We ask all of this in Jesus's name.

AMEN.

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⁶ The following sentences adapted from Heb 12:1–3.