

# THE GIANTS OF FAITH AND THEIR LEGACY TO THE CHURCH

## GOLDEN TEXT

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see”. (Hebrews 11:1).

## USEFUL PRACTICE

Faith is unreserved trust in the promises of God.

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Hebrews 11:1-8, 22-26, 30-34**

1 - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

2 - This is what the ancients were commended for.

3 - By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

4 - By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

5 - By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.

6 - And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

7 - By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

8 - By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

22 - By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

23 - By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

24 - By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

25 - He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

26 - He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

30 - By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

31 - By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

32 - And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets,

33 - who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions,

34 - quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

## **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

To present the giants of faith according to Hebrews 11 and their legacy to the Church.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

**I. To discuss** the faith that builds trust in God;

**II. To show** that faith makes us see the impossible;

**III. To understand** that faith gives power to move forward.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The author had just made his long exposition on the supremacy of Christ, his priesthood, and the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old one. This exposition began in the first chapter and extended through almost the entire chapter ten. Here he gives a historical account of the journey of faith of the men and women of God in the Old Covenant and how this should be taken as an example for New Covenant Christians. This faith, unlike the concept of justification given by Paul, appears here with a sense of boldness, perseverance, and trust in God's promises. The faith demonstrated by them at different moments in history, and in different situations, was the guarantee for their insertion into the gallery of Bible heroes. We must imitate this same faith, which has ensured that they always advance and never fall back.

### **I - FAITH THAT CREATES TRUST IN GOD**

**1. Abel's sacrifice.** The author begins his gallery of the heroes of faith with Abel, the first example of a man of faith (Heb. 11:4). Abel was a man who, in the early days of mankind, dared to trust in God. The Bible shows that his sacrifice, made with faith, pleased God. The worship he rendered was true! There is much speculation about the nature of the sacrifice offered by Abel, but the sacred text says nothing about it. The fact is that Abel's faith was an operating faith, unlike the faith of Cain, his brother. For the author of Hebrews, Christians, like Abel, should be totally confident because the Christ they follow is in all things superior to Abel (Heb. 12:24).

**2. The testimony of Enoch.** There are very few references to Enoch in Bible writings. But what little there is is enough to inspire faith and trust (Heb. 11:5). Only two people are cited in the Bible who did not experience death, one of them is Elijah the prophet of Tishbi, the other is Enoch. The Bible says that this taking away of Enoch happened because of this "walking" with God. No one comes near to the Father, much less walks with him, unless they show faith. God is sovereign and acts as he pleases, but the fact is that God called Enoch to be close to him because of his walking in faith. Without faith no one pleases God.

**3. Noah's confidence.** In his eschatological sermon, Jesus referred to the days of Noah as a time of spiritual insensitivity. It was a short-sighted generation, like ours! All about right here, right now. In Noah's day there was already a kind of hedonism, because everyone was concerned only with what gave immediate pleasure (Mt 24:37-39). They did not "realize," but Noah did. When no one could hear God, Noah heard him: "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith." (Heb. 11:7).

## **II - FAITH THAT MAKES US SEE THE INVISIBLE**

**1. The obedience of Abraham.** After having spoken of Abel, Enoch and Noah, the author now focuses his argument on the faith of Abraham, the patriarch of the Hebrew nation. All the names quoted above are taken as examples of faith, but none of them had become a model for the Jews, as had Abraham. When called by God, Abraham obeyed and his faith guided him even when he did not know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8). But Abraham was not only the father of the Jews, he was the father of all "those who have faith" (Gal. 3:7). Christians should follow in his footsteps with the same obedience and faith as the friend of God.

**2. Joseph's faithfulness.** Scripture testifies to Joseph's faithfulness. Though sold, he never sold himself (Acts 7:9-10). Faith kept him alive in Egypt. If Abraham's faith caused him to know the unknown, on the other hand, Joseph's faith made him see the invisible (Hebrews 11:22). Joseph, by faith, "saw" the Exodus of the Jewish people. In fact, the Greek word "departure" (v.22) is the same word used to refer to the Exodus. It is this faith that makes us see the unknown and believe in the future, which the author exhorts believers to demonstrate.

**3. The Determination of Moses.** The journey of the Exodus, under the leadership of Moses, lasted forty years. However, the journey of Moses' faith began much earlier (Heb. 11:24, 25). Moses was a determined, bold, confident man and full of faith. His faith also allowed him to see the invisible, for he regarded "disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. 11:26). He "saw" Christ, even though he had lived hundreds of years before. Why not follow his example of faith in the spiritual journey?

## **III - FAITH THAT GIVES POWER TO MOVE AHEAD**

**1. The boldness of Joshua.** Moses had died and Joshua had the mission of bringing the people into the Promised Land. However, entering the land could not be done while Jericho was standing. It was no use having left

Egypt to stay out of Canaan. The people would only stand if Jericho fell. In a war victory belongs to those who are more numerous, well-armed and better trained. Israel did not have such capabilities. The author then shows how they overcame - by faith (Heb. 11:30). Yes, faith was the infallible weapon in this war! If faith made them move ahead in the conquest of earthly Canaan, much more can this same faith do in the heavenly journey.

**2. The courage of Rahab.** In the fall of Jericho, Rahab came out alive. She escaped, as the Bible states, by faith (Heb. 11:31). But her faith did more - by faith, Rahab, even though she was a Gentile, entered into the lineage of the people of God (Mt 1:5). Rahab's faith should serve as an inspiration and motivation for those on their journey to heavenly Canaan.

**3. The heroism of Gideon.** The author closes his list of heroes of faith by citing various Bible characters. Gideon, one of the judges during the Israelite tribal regime (Heb. 11:32), tops the list. Gideon was challenged by God to seek the deliverance of his people through faith. At a numerical and warlike disadvantage, he relied only on faith in the greatness of God. With only 300 men, but with the divine promise received by faith, he gave great deliverance to his people. God does not count on numbers, He counts on those who have faith!

## CONCLUSION

The author of Hebrews contrasts the walk of various characters in biblical history with the career proposed to Christians. These characters had in common a long and challenging journey to go on. Without perseverance, boldness and faith none of them would have been able to reach their final destination. The only way not to go back is to walk in faith. Faith knocks down obstacles, kills the Enemy and raises the downcast up.