

# Hebrews 11 Sermon Illustrations

## HEBREWS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS OUR DAILY BREAD, et. al.

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### Hebrews 11:1 Closed Gates

Songwriter Oscar Eliason wrote,

"Got any rivers you think are uncrossable? Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?"

He responded to these questions by saying,

"God specializes in things thought impossible."

Every Christian faces obstacles along life's pathway, and walking in God's will doesn't guarantee that our way will be easy. But no matter how difficult, we can trust God and go forward in faith.

At the entrance to a local hospital is an automatic gate designed to rise when a car activates a hidden sensor near the entrance. When I drive up the ramp toward the gate, it remains down, blocking the entrance. But as I get closer, the arm swings up, allowing me to proceed. If I were to park my car a few yards from the entrance, the gate would stay closed. Only when I move forward does it open.

Someone said, "If God built a bridge a yard ahead, it could not be a bridge of faith." It's the first step into the unseen that proves we have faith. Abraham, for example, "went out, not knowing where he was going" (Heb. 11:8). He obeyed God and relied on Him to clear the path.

When we walk in obedience to the Lord and come upon a closed gate, we can confidently take the next step of faith. As we move forward we will see God open the way. —P. R. Van Gorder (See related resource [By Faith in Hebrews 11](#))

Faith is the gate between our peril and God's power.

### Hebrews 11:1 THE CURE FOR FUTILITY

A terminally ill man in the hospital told me that life had given him a raw deal. He felt cheated because he had worked hard but would not be able to enjoy retirement. Besides, he was lonely. He and his wife didn't have a good relationship, and his children and grandchildren seldom visited him. His former business associates ignored him. He was bitter and didn't want to hear about God.

The writer of Ecclesiastes also felt a sense of futility. He observed hardworking people caught up in a monotonous and pointless cycle, only to die and be forgotten. He wrote, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." (1:2). But he recognized that this was not the whole picture. Throughout the book he said that life gains meaning when God is acknowledged.

And the writer of Hebrews, penning his words after the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, declared that faith instills hope and helps us to understand the truths that give meaning and purpose to life.

Do you feel as if life has cheated you? If you do, look in faith to Jesus. He was unjustly nailed to a cross so you could be forgiven of your sin and have a life that is fulfilling (Jn. 3:16; 10:10). As you choose to live by faith for Him, He will deliver you from those feelings of futility.-- Herbert Vander Lugt

Jesus is all the world to me,

My life, my joy, my all;  
He is my strength from day to day,  
Without Him I would fall.-- Thompson

### **Christ turns life right-side-up in an upside-down-world.**

#### **Hebrews 11:1 What Faith Is And Does**

When I was in my mid-teens, I sometimes wondered if my faith was real. I had sincerely placed my trust in Jesus Christ, yet the injustices in society and writings of unbelievers raised doubts in my mind. I didn't dare mention this to anybody. However, I repeatedly committed myself anew to Christ and to His teachings for my life.

Since then, many have told me that they are troubled by the description of faith in Hebrews 11:1. To them it defines faith as absolute intellectual certainty—something they do not always have. But in its context, this verse explains both what faith is and what it does. It affirms the certainty that comes as we continue in our commitment to trust Jesus and His Word. As we do, we become assured of the reality of God and the heaven that awaits us.

To test the validity of this statement, consider the steadfast faith of elderly believers who have continued trusting Jesus through great trials, sorrow, and pain. They will tell you that Jesus has become so real and precious to them that they are absolutely sure of Him and the truthfulness of His promises.

Don't let times of doubt discourage you. Keep trusting and obeying the Lord Jesus and His Word. As you do, your confidence will grow. —Herbert Vander Lugt

There can be those times when our minds are in doubt,  
Times when we ask what our faith is about;  
But we can believe Him, we know that He cares  
For our God is real, as the Bible declares. —Fitzhugh

#### **Feed your faith and your doubts will starve.**

#### **Hebrews 11:1 Mailbox Faith**

Whenever I mail a letter, it's an exercise of trust. Let me explain what I mean. When I write to a distant friend, it's impossible to deliver the letter myself. I need the help of the postal service. But for them to do their part, I have to drop my letter in the mailbox first. I can't hang on to it. I have to place it in the mail slot and let go. Then I must trust the postal service to take over until my letter is delivered to my friend's home. Although I can't see what happens to it, my faith in the postal service assures me that my letter is as good as there!

Likewise, whenever we're faced with a problem, our faith is challenged. Knowing that it's impossible to resolve the difficulty ourselves, we recognize our need of God's help. First, though, we must go to Him in prayer. Until that moment, we're still holding on to our problem. We know the situation won't get resolved until we let go and commit it into God's hands. Once we let go, we then must trust God to take over until the problem is resolved in His way. Although we can't see what He's doing, our faith is "the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), the assurance that His work is as good as done!

Have you exercised trust in Him today? —Joanie Yoder

Help us, Lord, to give our burdens  
To Your tender, loving care;  
Grant us faith to trust You fully,  
Knowing that each one You bear. --DJD

### **Trusting God turns problems into opportunities.**

#### **Hebrews 11:1 THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT--FAITH**

FAITH IS an attribute of the heart, rather than of the head. It is largely intuitive in its first promptings. It is impossible to argue men into faith. Do not think, discuss, or reason too much about Faith, or you will miss it. It is like Love in this, that when you turn the dissecting knife on it for the purpose of analysis, its spirit and life vanish, leaving only the faded relics of what was once a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. If, however, turning from Faith to any object which is worthy of it, you concentrate heart and mind there, almost unconsciously Faith will have arisen and thriven to Maturity.

Faith has two kinds of objective, first a person, and secondly a statement. When we are drawn powerfully towards a person, so as to

feel able to entrust our soul, our destiny, our most precious possessions to His care, with an inward feeling of tranquillity and certainty that all is safe with Him, and that He will do better for us than we could do for ourselves, that is faith.

We may be attracted by a statement, which appeals to our moral sense; it is consistent with the decisions of our conscience; or perhaps, as the utterance of One in whom we repose utter confidence, it commends itself to us for His sake. We accept that statement; we rest on it. We believe that what it attests as fact either did happen or will happen. We are as sure of it as though we have been able to attest it by our senses of sight, hearing, or touch. That also is faith. "Faith is a well grounded assurance of that for which we hope, and a conviction of the reality of the unseen" (Heb11:1. Weymouth).

We must indicate a difference between this faith and "the faith once delivered to the saints." The former is the heart that accepts, and the hand that reaches out to obtain; the latter is the body of Truth to be accepted.

Out of faith comes faithfulness. Faith is your trust in another; faithfulness is your worthiness to be trusted. A faithful soul, one that can be absolutely relied upon, is of great price. Nothing so quickens our faith as to meditate on God's absolute trustworthiness. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

PRAYER - Give us faith in Thy love that never wearies or faints. Whatever else we doubt, may we never question the perfectness of Thy lovingkindness. Fulfil in US the good pleasure of Thy will, and the work o f faith with power. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

### **Hebrews 11:1-6,32-40 Jailed To Free Others**

The missionary had been in jail for more than 2 weeks. He was stuck behind bars in a Kosovo prison because he had tried to tell others about Jesus Christ.

Other missionaries tried to negotiate for his freedom, but day after day they were turned down. Eventually they received the good news that their friend would soon be released, so they went to the jail to tell him.

The missionaries discovered that their friend had been witnessing to his fellow inmates, and when they told him that he was about to be let out of jail, he said, "No, not yet. Give me another week. I need more time to share the gospel with these people."

What does it take for a person to be so burdened for others that he is willing to stay locked up so he can continue to proclaim the gospel? First, it takes an unwavering faith that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven (John 14:6; Hebrews 11:1-6) and that life without Him leads to a hopeless future. Second, it takes a faith that God is in control and that He can be trusted with our lives when we are not in control at all (Proverbs 3:5-6; Hebrews 11:32-40). And third, it takes a faith that results in action—not just thoughts and words (James 2:26).

Do we have that kind of faith? —Dave Branon

Lord, help me to love with both words and deeds,  
To reach out to sinners and meet their needs;  
Lord, burden my heart for those lost in sin,  
With mercy and love that flows from within. —Fitzhugh

**True faith produces a life full of actions, not a head full of facts.**

### **Hebrews 11:1-7 HOW TO KNOW THERE'S A GOD**

He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. - Hebrews 11:6

An athiest said to a Quaker, "Have you ever seen God? Have you ever felt God? Have you ever smelled God? And you say you have a God!"

After a long pause, the Quaker replied, "Hast thou ever seen thy brains? Hast thou ever felt thy brains? Hast thou ever smelled thy brains? And thou sayest thou hast brains!"

There are probably very few atheists - those who have seriously thought about life and concluded that there is no God. There are more agnostics - thinking people who say, "I don't know." The vast majority of individuals, however, affirm at least intellectually - that God exists.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that recognizing God's existence is the first step to knowing Him personally. Then we must seek Him and believe that He will reward our quest to know Him.

Our search will ultimately lead us to consider Jesus. He declared, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). He also said that the person who desires to obey God will recognize that He, Jesus, spoke the truth (7:17).

You or someone you know may be at step one: recognizing that God exists. Remember, the Lord rewards those who earnestly seek to know Him. And a personal relationship with Him comes only through faith in Christ. Dennis J. De Haan

I searched with all my heart to know  
If God was really there;  
He graciously revealed Himself -  
His mercy, love, and care. - Bierema

**If you're looking for God, you'll find Him in Christ.**

### **Hebrews 11:3 The God Of The Cosmos**

A group of distinguished scientists and theologians gathered in Washington, DC, to participate in the Cosmic Questions Conference. They discussed issues such as these: "Is there a God?" and "Can we believe that there is purpose and design in the universe?"

Some of the participants answered those questions emphatically, "No!" No God, no design, no purpose. But others, like John Polkinghorne, a British scholar and former president of Queens College at Cambridge, held staunchly to the opposite opinion. A noted physicist, Polkinghorne argued that the answers lie "beyond physics."

Without the Bible, scientists are baffled. They can guess and they can speak dogmatically, but they have no authoritative answers to the cosmic questions. The Bible alone tells us where everything came from, why everything exists, and what lies ahead. As Job learned, it was God who "laid the foundations of the earth" (Job 38:4).

We don't need to listen to the speculations of world-famous thinkers to find answers to the big questions of life. We just need to humbly and reverently study the Word of God. There we will find rest for our mind and peace for our soul. —Vernon C Grounds

#### **For Further Study**

Where did everything come from? (Ge 1:1-2:25; Job 38:4).  
For what purpose does it exist? (Ps 19:1; 66:1-4).  
What lies ahead? (1Th. 4:16, 17; Rev. 20:11-21:4).

**When you open your Bible, ask the Author to open your heart.**

### **Hebrews 11:3 Is Evolution A Fact?**

The theory of evolution is not without its problems. One scientist says this about life starting on its own: "Amino acids would have to be arranged in an exact sequence to form a protein ... just like the letters in a sentence. Mere laws of chemistry and physics cannot do that. The probability of a protein forming by chance would be 10<sup>64</sup> [10 with 64 zeros after it] to 1!"

Many people assume the theory of evolution to be true. But can it be scientifically proven? Something is considered scientifically true only if it can be repeatedly verified under laboratory conditions. The claim that life sprang up on its own out of a long impersonal process cannot pass this test of truth. That is why evolution remains only a theory.

So if you're ever tempted to doubt the Genesis account of the creation story, consider the alternative. The odds against even a simple protein creating itself are astronomical. How much more reasonable to believe God and His Word: "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" (Hebrews 11:3).

Isn't it more reasonable to believe that God designed and created the universe? (Genesis 1:1). —Dennis Fisher (See also [Faith and Science Hebrews 11:3](#))

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful—  
The Lord God made them all. —Alexander

**All creation points to the almighty Creator**

### **Hebrews 11:3 Countless Wonders**

When writer Aletha Lindstrom needs a lift for her spirits, she thinks of her favorite poetry book called Who Tells The Crocuses It's Spring? That prompts her to ask other questions like, "Who makes the trees turn all those beautiful colors in the autumn? Who splashes rain in shining puddles? Who makes the stars shimmer in the night?"

Such questions ought to stimulate our own grateful meditation. Centuries ago, Job exclaimed that it is God who "does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number" (Job 9:10).

It is God who reminds the sun to rise at its appointed time every morning. It is God who keeps the earth steadily rotating at tremendous speed. It is God who feeds the sparrow and dresses the lilies in their splendor. It is God who guides the feathered flocks southward in the autumn and then brings them north again in the spring.

Argue if you like that all these wonders are simply the operation of the laws of nature. But just as civil law is the expression of human will, so also natural law is the expression of God's will and wisdom.

As we see the wonders of creation all around us, let's worship the One who designed them.—Vernon C Grounds

This is my Father's world—  
The birds their carols raise;  
The morning light, the lily white  
Declare their Maker's praise. —Babcock

**In the wonders of creation we see God at work.**

### **Hebrews 11:3 Accident Or Design?**

The Bible opens with this magnificent statement: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). How simple those words are and yet how fathomless!

Dyson Freeman, one of today's most brilliant scientists, writes that nature's laws are marked by "the greatest mathematical simplicity and beauty."

While I am not a scientist or a mathematician, I am intrigued by this statement. If there is no Designer—no Creator God—how is it that our universe can be a law-abiding system marked by beauty and simplicity? I wonder, why isn't our universe in chaos?

The only reasonable explanation to me is the God of the Bible. As it says in Romans 1:20, "Since the creation of the world [God's] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that [we] are without excuse."

If it's only the reality of God's existence that explains the whole universe, that must also be true of our lives. We are not accidents but creatures designed by a Maker of limitless power and wisdom. Look for Him in what He has designed—you'll see Him there. —Vernon C Grounds

So much about His character  
God wanted to impart;  
Creation shows His handiwork—  
His Son reveals His heart. —Hess

**The design of creation points to the Master Designer**

### **Hebrews 11:3 Flying Backwards**

I had read that hummingbirds can fly backwards, but the cynic in me doubted it. So when my wife mounted a hummingbird feeder by the kitchen window and filled it with sugar water, I sat down with a cup of coffee to see if it was true.

Before long, hummingbirds began to appear—a ruby-throated male and several females. I soon gave up trying to watch their wings as they flew. All I could see was a blur. I was captivated by the feisty little creatures as they darted up and down, away and back, vying for an open spot at the feeder and chasing one another away.

After a while, only one bird was left—her long, thin beak sucking up the liquid. Then, when she was finished, she flew straight backwards, then up, and finally darted out of sight among the trees.

How did she do it? God knows. Sometime on the fifth day of creation, while He was forming whales, sharks, orioles, and loons, God created the hummingbird with its amazing ability to fly backwards—a miracle of His power.

I didn't need that awesome illustration to prove the existence and brilliance of God. But it did remind me once again that I have every reason to worship God, for I too am "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14). —David C. Egner

This is my Father's world—

The birds their carols raise;  
The morning light, the lily white,  
Declare their Maker's praise. —Babcock

### **All creation points to the almighty Creator.**

#### **Hebrews 11:3 Ten Words You'll Never Forget**

As part of a marketing campaign to attract subscribers, National Geographic magazine produced a remarkable brochure called 10 Pictures You'll Never Forget. Included in the pamphlet were photos such as astronaut Buzz Aldrin on the moon, Mount St. Helens erupting, a Brazilian jaguar sprawled across a tree branch, and a cherubic Russian schoolgirl signaling her age.

As I gaze at this brochure, I'm reminded that these 10 unforgettable scenes are possible only because of 10 unforgettable words: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

In this age of sophisticated sciences, we can be influenced to miss this key point because so much of what we read assumes a godless origin of this world. We need to remind ourselves that God made the moon, mountains, jaguars, and little girls.

Scripture tells many times that God is the first cause behind all that is: "You have made ... the earth and everything on it" (Neh. 9:6). "You laid the foundation of the earth" (Ps. 102:25). He is "the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them" (Acts 14:15).

Just 10 words. Don't forget them. They are the foundation of all the beauty and majesty of the universe. --J D Branon

Wind and water, light and sod  
Speak so faithfully of God;  
Let us give to Him our praise  
For the goodness He displays. --Anon.

### **All of creation bears God's autograph.**

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#### **Hebrews 11:4 ABEL; Or, The Young Man's Offering - James Smith, 1856**

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." Hebrews 11:4

There can be no doubt but the offering of sacrifices originated in the command of God. When man sinned, an atonement became necessary; for without shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sins. God, therefore, revealed his will, that the inferior creatures should be presented unto him in sacrifice, to typify and represent the glorious sacrifice that was to be offered in after times on Golgotha.

Adam was unquestionably the first sacrificer. What must have been the feelings of that first sinner, when he shed the blood of the first harmless lamb — to offer it to God upon the altar for his own sin! Family worship in his house was carried on through sacrifices for sin, and thank-offerings for mercies received.

Adam had two sons, who differed in their dispositions, pursuits, and religious feelings; they both worshiped God; but only one was accepted, because only one sought him after the appointed order. Cain was of the wicked one; his person and offering were rejected; and he is held up as a warning to all young men, who set up their reason in preference to obeying God according to his own revelation. But we have now only to do with Abel, whose person and offering were both acceptable to God.

WHAT did he offer? "Abel also presented an offering — some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions." He brought the prescribed lamb, the fattest, the finest he had; he presented it to God, slew it before God, and offered it upon the altar as prescribed by God. It was a sin-offering. In this he acknowledged sin. He confessed . . .

- that he was a sinner;
- that his nature was depraved;
- that his conduct was inconsistent;
- that he had offended a holy God;
- that he deserved punishment at his hands;
- that he had no hope in the mere mercy of God;
- that an atonement was necessary;
- that he expected pardon only through blood.

He, therefore, presented the lamb as his substitute, and sought that it might be accepted in his stead. By this act he renounced self, seeking to be accepted through another. He condemned himself, admitting that he deserved to die, as that lamb had died. He justified God in the sentence that he had passed in consequence of Adam's sin.

To this state, we must all be brought before we can be accepted of God, before our offerings can be pleasant in his sight. We must be convinced of sin, feel that we are sinners, and confess the same with sorrow before God. We must perceive the absolute need of an atonement for sin, and place our dependence on the blood of another for acceptance with God. We must seek and expect pardon only through blood, for that is the only medium through which it flows. We must heartily and honestly renounce ourselves, second God's sentence of condemnation passed in consequence of our sin, and justify God in the seeming severity of the sentence which awards eternal punishment for man's transgression.

Reader, have you ever been brought to this? Examine your heart, investigate the state of your soul, for a mistake here may be fatal.

HOW did Abel offer? "By faith Abel offered to God." He believed that God would provide a suitable and sufficient sacrifice for sin. That the seed of the woman would appear. That he would make the atonement that was necessary. That God would accept the sacrifice which he himself would provide when it was offered. That he would accept it for sinners. That its merit would avail for all who exercised faith in it, and looked for acceptance with God alone through it. He believed that God would confer all necessary blessings upon those who seek him through one all-glorious sacrifice.

He had confidence in God, and this produced love to God, and led him to honor God. He looked upon God as a father — devising means that his criminal children would not be banished from him. He believed that there was love in God's heart, that he had no pleasure in the death of a sinner. He, therefore, took the lamb, offered it up, and expected that God would accept both his person and services through a much better sacrifice than that.

He was a subject who had been in rebellion against his lawful sovereign; but he was now honoring the law and government by accepting the invitation to return to his allegiance, and seeking the pardon of his rebellion through the means prescribed by authority.

Just so, this is the way in which we must seek and find pardon, peace, and acceptance with God. It must be by faith, receiving God's testimony, acting upon God's Word, placing confidence in Christ's atoning blood, and submitting ourselves implicitly to his righteousness.

"Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Cain had no faith in God's promise; he rested in his own works, he expected to be accepted on account of his own offering, and, therefore, both his person and performances were rejected by God. Just so it is now with many; they have no faith in Jesus — they do not rely on his precious blood — they do not approach God, pleading his finished work; but they rest upon some frames, feelings, services, or sacrifice of their own; and, consequently, they know nothing of peace with God, acceptance before God, access to God, and joy in God. But what is religion without these? A form it may be, a substance it is not. A delusion it may be, a divine reality it cannot be. Observe, then —

First, there is no acceptance with God for a sinner, without a sacrifice. Without a bloody sacrifice. The so-called bloodless sacrifice of the popish mass, is an infamous delusion and deception. It is blood which makes atonement for the soul. And yet the blood of lambs, bulls, or goats, will not do it. No, it must be better blood. The blood of Jesus Christ alone, God's own dear Son — will cleanse us from all sin. But nothing else will, nothing else can. His blood is called "precious blood," there is infinite value and eternal efficacy in it. It is precious in the sight of God, precious to the anxious sinner, and precious to the happy believer.

Secondly, There is no acceptance for a sinner, through the sacrifice of Christ, without faith. Not that faith gives virtue or efficacy to the blood of Jesus. No, no! Faith adds nothing to the blood of the Lamb. But faith looks at it, admires it, places confidence in it, renounces everything besides, brings it before God, and pleads it in order to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Reader, the blood of Jesus will do you no good, if you have no personal dealings with it. You must view it as the price paid for the sinner's release, the satisfaction rendered to divine justice, an act of high honor rendered to the righteous government of the Most High God, and the only medium through which pardon, peace, reconciliation, and acceptance, can be enjoyed. You must have "faith in his blood," or you can never be pardoned, justified, sanctified, and made fit for Heaven. If Abel had not exercised faith in the blood of Christ, as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, he would have been rejected just the same as Cain was; and if you attempt to approach God in any other way, you will be rejected too.

Thirdly, There is no true faith without an offering. You may believe many things, you may believe much; but unless your faith centers in Christ, it is not "the faith of God's elect," it is not "the faith of the operation of God," it is not the faith to which the promise of salvation is made. Christ is the great object of faith. Christ is the great sacrifice for sin. Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

"Precious faith," as Peter calls it, always receives Christ, lives on Christ, and rejects everything that would eclipse the honor or conceal the glory of Christ. True faith is exceedingly jealous; it will have Christ first, and Christ last, and all good desires, good

efforts, and good works, come in between. Faith sprinkles everything with blood, and never ventures into God's presence without the basin in her hand.

When the believer has obtained and enjoyed his acceptance with God through faith in the righteousness and blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus — then he offers the sacrifice of praise; then he will do good, and communicate of his substance to God's cause and the poor saints, knowing that with such sacrifices God is well pleased (Hebrews 13:16). Faith always carries the blood in her right hand, when she goes in before the Lord, and brings her other sacrifices and offerings in her left hand; and her right hand is always foremost, as though her right arm were much longer than her left.

Reader, is your faith of this kind? Have you dealings with the blood of Jesus daily? Do you always offer the blood of Christ for your acceptance, and expect that all your poor performances will be accepted through that? Be very careful here, for unless you have true faith, and your faith be fixed on the right object — Christ will profit you nothing. The devils, believe — and tremble.

See, then the importance of faith. After Christ, nothing is more important. If we believe, not we shall be damned. Faith puts us in possession of every spiritual blessing; but if destitute of faith, whatever we may imagine, we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

See, also, the necessity of approaching God in his own way. Cain brought an offering, he had an altar — but he was rejected. As Joseph said to his brethren, "You shall not see my face — unless your brother is with you," so God will never look upon a sinner with approbation, or accept a sinner at his throne — unless he has the blood of Jesus with him. Jesus said. "I am the way — no man comes unto the Father but by me." This is the fixed and immutable decree of Heaven, settled in the eternal council, and abiding sure forever: "No sinner can come to the Father, but by Jesus." Neither priest, pope, nor virgin Mary will do; neither sufferings, prayers, nor penances will do; not all the saints of God, with all the angelic host combined, could obtain access to, or acceptance with, God for a sinner — but through the blood of Jesus.

This is the way, the only way, therefore walk in it. The way to be accepted and honored of God, is just to do as Abel did — bring the LAMB, confess sin, plead its blood, rely on its merits — and you will soon obtain witness that you are righteous. God will testify his approbation, and you will obtain power to conquer sin, mortify corruption, overcome the world, vanquish Satan, and be more than a conqueror through Him that loved you!

This was the case with the young men to whom John wrote; therefore he said, "I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one," (John 2:13, 14). Let young men, then, see to it, that they have faith in Christ; that their faith, is a growing faith, that it is a working faith, that it is a conquering faith; that it puts the crown on the head of Jesus, the world under their feet, and keeps eternal glory in their eye! True faith . . .

- roots itself in God's Word,
- is nourished by precious blood,
- achieves wonders in God's cause, and
- invariably keeps its possessor in the dust, singing:

"Now I have found the ground, wherein  
Sure my soul's anchor may remain,  
The wounds of Jesus for my sin,  
Before the world's foundation slain,  
Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,  
When Heaven and earth are fled away.

O love, you bottomless abyss!  
My sins are swallowed up in thee;  
Covered is my unrighteousness,  
Nor spot of guilt remains on me!  
While Jesus' blood through earth and skies,  
Mercy, free boundless mercy, cries!

Jesus, I know, has died for me,  
Here is my hope, my joy, my rest!  
Hither, when Hell assails, I flee,  
I look into my Savior's breast;  
Away, sad doubt and anxious fear,



Mercy and love are written there!

Fixed on this ground will I remain,  
Though my heart fail and flesh decay;  
This anchor shall my soul sustain  
When earth's foundations melt away,  
Mercy's full power I then shall prove,  
Loved with an everlasting love!"

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### Hebrews 11:5-7 Every Step Counts

People who want to feel better, reduce stress, and shed unwanted pounds are discovering that walking may be the best exercise of all. A fitness philosophy of 10,000 steps a day, which first took hold in Japan, is gaining popularity in other countries. Experts advise starting slowly and working toward a higher goal, realizing each day that every step counts.

It's even more important to stay spiritually fit by "walking with God," which the Bible describes as an intimate, growing relationship with the Lord. "Enoch walked with God three hundred years" (Genesis 5:22). "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God" (6:9). Both men are mentioned in Hebrews 11, where they are commended for their faith. "Enoch ... had this testimony, that he pleased God" (v.5). "Noah ... became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (v.7).

To walk with God, we need to keep in step without running ahead or lagging behind. Along the way, we talk with the Lord, listen to Him, and enjoy His presence. We trust His guidance when we cannot see what lies ahead. It is not just the destination that's important, but the journey we take together.

There's no better time than now to begin walking with God, because each day every step counts. —David C. McCasland

Knowing God will take a lifetime,  
Walking with Him day by day,  
Learning all we can about Him,  
Loving Him in every way. —Sper

### You are headed in the right direction when you walk with God

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#### Hebrews 11:6 Looking For Proof

A friend and I were talking about God and life after death. "There is one thing I wish," he said. "I wish I had proof that there is a God."

In Hebrews 11:6 we read, "He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." The Bible makes no attempt to prove God's existence. It assumes it.

Yet three paths are open to the earnest seeker who wants to know if there is a God. The first is nature. Paul wrote, "His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20).

The second path is conscience, a God-given inner compass that points us to God's standards of right and wrong (2:14-15).

The most convincing path is that of putting truth to the test. Those who desire to please God and are willing to obey Him will find that their faith is based in reality, for God rewards "those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Assurance always follows faith.

God is too big to be proven. It has been said that a god who could be proven would not be worth proving. But when we trust Jesus as our Savior, His Spirit gives us the assurance that our faith is well-founded. —Dennis J. De Haan

Look not to reason's arguments  
If God you seek to find;  
Look only to His holy Word,  
For sin has made us blind. —D. De Haan

### The infinite God cannot be measured by finite man.

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#### Hebrews 11:6 Job Opening

About this time last year, a job became available in the church my wife and I attend. Just over a week before Christmas, my mother-in-law, Lenore Tuttle, died at the age of 85. When she went home to be with Jesus, she left a void not only in our family but also in

our church. We were now without one of our most faithful prayer warriors.

At Mother Tuttle's funeral, the presiding pastor showed the congregation her prayer box. It contained dozens of prayer cards on which she had written the names of people she prayed for every day, including one that mentioned the pastor's gall bladder surgery. On top of that prayer box was this verse: "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" (Hebrews 11:6). She was a true prayer warrior who diligently sought the Lord.

Each day, many older saints, who have continued steadfastly in prayer (Romans 12:12), leave this earth through death and move on to heaven. This creates a "job opening" for people who will commit themselves to praying faithfully. Many of these positions remain unfilled. Will you fill one of them? —Dave Branon

They labor well who intercede  
For others with a pressing need;  
It's on their knees they often work  
And from its rigor will not shirk. -D. De Haan

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### **Hebrews 11:6 Wanted: Prayer Warriors.**

Job must have felt as if he were on a roller coaster. One day he seemed to have everything, then suddenly everything was taken away. He lost his family, his possessions, his health, and he even became alienated from his wife and friends.

When Job's thoughts sank into the dark depths of doubt, he felt as if God had become an inaccessible stranger. He cried out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" (23:3).

Many people would say that Job was foolish to think that he could ever find God. In fact, one present-day atheist has called the quest for God "the biggest wild-goose chase in history."

But if you once felt close to God and now feel distant, or if you've never known the reality of a relationship with Him, don't believe for a split-second that you're on a wild-goose chase.

Remember, He loves you so much that He sent His Son to die for you (Jn. 3:16). While you are groping for Him in the darkness, a nail-pierced hand is being lovingly extended toward you. Grasp it in faith! You will discover that the quest for God is not a wild-goose chase, but the way to find forgiveness of sin and the fulfillment of your deepest desire: a personal relationship with the God of the universe. --V C Grounds

Found by God! Found by God!  
Lost in sin, but now I am set free;  
It was not I who found, O Shepherd true,  
No, I was found by Thee. --Anon.

### **God sometimes puts us in the dark so that we may see the light.**

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### **Hebrews 11:6 Finding God**

Tourists rarely take great photographs. They seldom make the effort to be at the right spot at the right time to get the right angle of light in the right weather conditions. To capture beautiful outdoor pictures, professional photographers are careful to view the scene from different angles, during different seasons, and at different times of day.

This makes me wonder if the reason some people don't have a clear picture of the beauty and glory of God is that they make snap judgments. They come to wrong conclusions about God based on a bad church experience, or an encounter with someone who claims to be a Christian but isn't living like one. They misjudge what the Lord is like and turn away from Him, feeling disillusioned.

The pursuit of God involves more than casual observation. King David told his son Solomon, "If you seek Him, He will be found by you" (1 Chronicles 28:9). The psalmist said, "Blessed are those who ... seek Him with the whole heart!" (Psalm 119:2). And the author of Hebrews wrote that God rewards "those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

To see and know God in all His fullness and glory, we can't approach Him like tourists. We need to seek Him at all times, with all our heart.—Julie Ackerman Link

Lord, I am seeking You with all my heart,  
With all my soul and all my mind;

For wondrous blessings You alone impart—  
In seeking I will surely find. —Hess

**To find God, we must be willing to seek Him.**

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### **Hebrews 11:6 What God Do We Believe In?**

For more than 50 years, the Gallup organization has been surveying the religious beliefs of the American people. Here are some of their findings: In 1947, 93% professed faith in God, 73% expected an afterlife, 90% affirmed that they pray, and 41% attended some kind of church service frequently. In 1997, the survey findings were virtually the same, except that professed faith in God went up to 96%.

What most concerned one analyst, however, was the content of the faith of the 96% who said they believed in God. He wondered if many of them believed in "a celestial Santa Claus" or a "disengaged clockmaker" who set the world in motion but now couldn't be bothered by human needs.

If we take the Bible as our guide, we worship the one true God. He is the holy, eternal, almighty, infinitely wise, and gracious Creator, who abhors sin and yet forgives on the basis of the sacrifice of His Son on Calvary. This one true and living God is the God who can assure us of life forever in heaven's glory.

Even though it's unlikely that 96% of Americans believe in the God of the Bible, this is the God in whom we all must believe. --V C Grounds

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious--Thy great name we praise. --Smith

**Faith is misplaced if it is not in the God of the Bible.**

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### **Hebrews 11:7**

#### **Crooked And Straight**

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great London preacher, found in Noah's life the principle that "every act of faith condemns the world." "By faith Noah ... 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" (Hebrews 11:7).

Commenting on that verse, Spurgeon said: "Live a holy life ... I have heard it said that if there is a crooked stick, and you want to show how crooked it is, you need not waste words in description. Place a straight one by the side of it, and the thing is done directly. Noah condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

The New Testament calls Noah "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), even though none of his "sermons" are recorded in the Bible. Perhaps it was Noah's obedience to God in building the ark that stands as his greatest witness to a self-centered and violent generation. "According to all that God commanded him, so he did" (Genesis 6:22).

How easy it is to be critical of the sins of others. But how much more powerful to demonstrate the grace and righteousness of our God by living for Him. —David C. McCasland

So let our lips and lives express  
The holy gospel we profess;  
So let our works and virtues shine  
To prove the doctrine all divine. —Watts

**The Christian's life is the world's Bible**

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### **Hebrews 11:7 THE DAYS OF NOAH**

WE DO well to give heed to the description given of the "days of Noah, for our Lord said, that as it was in those days, so shall it be in the days that close the present age (Matt24:37-39). The world of that time had made great progress in the arts and civilization of life. But, as it has happened repeatedly all through human history, great luxury produced infamous immorality, cruelty, and widespread indifference to the claims of God. Things took place in those olden times which have their counterpart in the great cities

of our time. In its feverish atmosphere sin of every kind abounded, and in mercy to the race, there was no alternative than to bring that wicked generation to an end. "They ate, they drank; they married, and were given in marriage, and knew not, till the flood came and carried them all away."

Amidst all this, Noah lived an unblemished and righteous life. He walked in daily converse with God (Gen6:8-9). His Almighty Friend was able to reveal to him His intentions. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

Keep near to God, that you may hear the accents of His still small voice. Our happiest experience is when we walk with Him in unbroken fellowship, and He takes us into covenant with Himself. Through any one individual, whose heart is perfect toward Him, God will save others. We too shall cross the Flood of Death and enter the new life of Resurrection, but we must be quick to detect His voice, and our hands deft to fulfil the revelations of our Divine Teacher and Friend.

PRAYER - Lead me, O Lord, in a straight way unto Thyself, and keep me in Thy grace unto the end. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

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### Hebrews 11:8 Called To Bless Others

One of life's most distressing experiences is being separated from the things and the people we love. It is often difficult to leave a house that holds many pleasant memories, and it is always hard to say goodbye to loved ones when we must leave them.

So it wasn't easy for Abraham to obey God's demand that he separate himself from his country and his friends and relatives. Yet, without obedience to God's command, there would have been no blessing for him or his descendants.

God called Abraham to this life of special consecration because He had chosen him to be the channel through which He would work His plan of redemption. The human race had rebelled and become idolatrous, and Abraham needed to worship the one true God.

It is still the duty of all believers to sever connections with anything that hinders our spiritual progress and effectiveness. We must forsake all sin, all self-will, and every worldly pleasure that draws our heart away from God.

If we do this, when we are tested and tried the spiritual fiber of our lives will stand the test. We'll be strengthened in the process, so that we in turn might be a blessing to those around us. —Herbert Vander Lugt

All for Jesus, all for Jesus!  
All my being's ransomed powers:  
All my thoughts and words and doings,  
All my days and all my hours.  
—James

### Attachment to Christ is the secret of detachment from the world.

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### Hebrews 11:8-16 Occupied With Heaven

We've all heard of people who are so heavenly-minded that they are no earthly good. We've also heard about preachers who promise their flock great reward in heaven, but ignore life's difficulties. Some people accuse them of being "pie-in-the-sky prophets" who have forgotten that we must still live in the world.

But according to the writer of Hebrews, there is a proper heavenly-mindedness. It's the virtue that enabled Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to live by faith as tent-dwelling nomads in Canaan (11:8-10).

In his book Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis wrote, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The apostles themselves, ... the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in.'"

If our minds are properly occupied with heaven, we can't help but do earthly good. --H V Lugt

Go up to the mountain of blessing  
Alone with the Master in prayer;  
Then down to the work in the valley below,  
Your face with the love-light of Jesus aglow. --Anon.

**As you mind your earthly duties, keep heaven in mind.**

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### **Hebrews 11:8-19 Serving With Limitations**

When he was not yet 4 years old, Itzhak Perlman was stricken by polio, making him unable to use his legs. But he compensated for that loss by devoting himself to his violin. In the years that followed, he delighted multitudes of people with his music. He lost the use of his legs but his music gave him wings. What an inspiring example of devotion!

Some of God's servants have shown a similar devotion to their Lord. They have suffered the loss of certain abilities but have been inspired to develop other capacities for service. For example, when William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, discovered that he was going blind, he did not surrender to despair. With a positive outlook, he told his colleagues that he had served Christ while he could see, and he would do his utmost to serve Him even when blind.

What motivates Christians to keep on serving and following Jesus to the best of their ability despite loss or hardship? Like Abraham, we live by faith. We look beyond this life and wait "for the city ... whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). It's "a better ... heavenly country" (v.16).

May the Holy Spirit empower us to glorify Christ—no matter what our limitations.—Vernon C Grounds

Give me, Savior, a purpose deep,  
In joy or sorrow Thy trust to keep;  
And so through trouble, care, and strife,  
Glorify Thee in my daily life. —Bell

### **Circumstances that imprison us cannot limit God's work through us**

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#### **Hebrews 11:8-11 Marching Off The Map**

Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans. Our lives are subject to detours and corrections that we never expected or imagined.

Abraham and Sarah could testify to that. They were planning for retirement when life "happened" to them. God adjusted their agenda. He told Abraham, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). So this old couple packed up the tent and headed out to only God knew where.

When Alexander the Great had completed his conquest of Persia, he headed east. Author Halford Luccock said the general "marched off his maps."

That happened to Sarah and Abraham. God gave them marching orders without a map. They needed only enough faith to begin the journey, and they headed out to unknown territories and unimagined adventures. God never told them He would turn them "every which way but loose" before fulfilling His promise of a son who would become a great nation.

Make your plans. But write them on paper, not in concrete. God and life have a way of intruding and leading you on a journey that you might not have anticipated in your wildest dreams.—Haddon W. Robinson

Many things about tomorrow  
I don't seem to understand;  
But I know who holds tomorrow  
And I know who holds my hand. —Stanphill  
© 1950 Singspiration Music, Inc.

### **A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. —Proverbs 16:9**

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#### **Hebrews 11:9 Our Home Is Ahead**

Now that I'm getting closer to the end of life's journey, I'm thinking more like a transient. I suppose it's natural. Abraham first described himself as "a foreigner and a visitor" when he was buying a burial plot for Sarah (Genesis 23:4). Time and death make you think about such things.

Most elderly believers say the same thing: There's no home for us this side of heaven. Like Pilgrim in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, once we've caught sight of the Celestial City we can never be content with anything less. Like Abraham, we look for a city

whose builder is God (Hebrews 11:10).

In Tolkien's The Lord Of The Rings, as Frodo and the other hobbits set out on their great adventure, they sing, "Home is behind, the world ahead." But for Christians, it's the other way around: The world is behind; our home is ahead.

There are no valleys of weeping there, for "God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). That promise makes the present journey easier to endure.

Put another way, it's the hope of going home that keeps me going. I can hardly wait to get there! —David H. Roper

I have a home in heaven above,  
From sin and sorrow free,  
A mansion which eternal love  
Designed and formed for me. —Bennett

**The more you look forward to heaven, the less you'll desire of earth.**

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### **Hebrews 11:9 Plodders For God**

In the Bible, the life of faith is often described as a walk (Gen. 17:1; Ps. 84:11; Mic. 6:8; Rom. 8:1; Gal. 5:25). For most of us, our Christian pilgrimage involves plodding, a pace that sometimes feels unspiritual and unproductive. My dictionary defines plodding as "making one's way slowly and perseveringly."

Two of God's earliest plodders, Abraham and Sarah, trusted God's promises even though they had to wait many years for those promises to be fulfilled (Heb. 11:8-12).

Another example of productive plodding is William Carey. A shoemaker by trade, Carey became a scholar, a linguist, and the father of modern missions. He lived by this motto: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." In old age, he made one thing clear, however: "If, after my removal, anyone should think it worth his while to write my life, I will give you a criterion by which you may judge of its correctness. If he gives me credit for being a plodder, he will describe me justly. Anything beyond this will be too much." Then he added, "I can plod... To this I owe everything."

Are you fulfilling your God-given responsibilities patiently by faith, or do you feel like giving up? God wants you to be a purposeful plodder. —Joanie Yoder

Day by day perform your mission,  
With Christ's help keep at your tasks;  
Be encouraged by His presence--  
Faithfulness is all He asks. --Bosch

**The world crowns quick success; God crowns long-term faithfulness.**

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### **Hebrews 11:13 Tramps And Pilgrims**

During the Great Depression of the early 1930s, many men became tramps. They hopped freight trains to travel from place to place, slept in empty boxcars, and earned a little money by doing seasonal jobs. When they couldn't find a job, they resorted to begging. My mother was a "soft touch" for any such drifters who came to our door for food. They had lost the comfortable security of a home.

Like the tramp, a pilgrim may be without the comfort and protection of a home, but he knows where he is going. His hopes and aspirations are set upon a goal.

The Christian is to be that kind of pilgrim. In Hebrews we read about the heroes of the faith, who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (11:13). They were able to live godly lives of faith because they looked forward to "a better, that is, a heavenly country" (v.16).

The Lord is preparing you and me for eternity, and everything we do is full of significance. Though this earth is not our permanent place of habitation, we are not aimless vagabonds. We are to be sojourners who live responsibly as we travel to our prepared destination. We have a heavenly Father who loves us and will welcome us into that home made ready by our Savior. —Herbert Vander Lugt

A few more watches keeping,

A few more foes to down,  
As pilgrims brave we journey  
To win the victor's crown! —Bosch

**Don't drive your stakes too deep; we're moving in the morning!**

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### **Hebrews 11:13 By Faith**

Every day Lisa and David Holden asked God for a baby. She writes that they prayed

"sometimes with bitter disappointment, sometimes with a confidence that seemed infallible, and sometimes with frustration and a hurt so deep it ached."

Lisa finally conceived, and 4-year-old Peter now brightens their lives.

Lisa and David had close friends who also wanted children. They too prayed fervently about their situation. Eventually they decided to adopt but were told they were too old. Both couples prayed in faith. One request was granted; the other was denied.

In Hebrews 11:11 we read, "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive." But in contrast, when the apostle Paul prayed that his unidentified "thorn in the flesh" be removed from him, the Lord responded, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2Cor. 12:9), and the "thorn" remained. Even Christ Himself prayed to His heavenly Father that the cup of agony awaiting Him at Calvary

might be taken from Him, but He added, "Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

O Lord, whether or not our deepest longings and most desperate prayers are granted, our faith is in You. Help us to desire Your will above all else. Amen. - D C Egner

I prayed -- the answer long deferred  
Brought not the thing I sought;  
He answered better than my plea,  
Yes, better than my thought --Anon.

**When God's answer is negative, His reason is affirmative.**

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### **Hebrews 11:13 Morning and evening : Daily readings (May 2 PM)**

Behold the epitaph of all those blessed saints who fell asleep before the coming of our Lord! It matters nothing how else they died, whether of old age, or by violent means; this one point, in which they all agree, is the most worthy of record, "they all died in faith." In faith they lived—it was their comfort, their guide, their motive and their support; and in the same spiritual grace they died, ending their life-song in the sweet strain in which they had so long continued. They did not die resting in the flesh or upon their own attainments; they made no advance from their first way of acceptance with God, but held to the way of faith to the end. Faith is as precious to die by as to live by.

Dying in faith has distinct reference to the past. They believed the promises which had gone before, and were assured that their sins were blotted out through the mercy of God. Dying in faith has to do with the present. These saints were confident of their acceptance with God, they enjoyed the beams of his love, and rested in his faithfulness. Dying in faith looks into the future. They fell asleep, affirming that the Messiah would surely come, and that when he would in the last days appear upon the earth, they would rise from their graves to behold him. To them the pains of death were but the birth-pangs of a better state. Take courage, my soul, as thou readest this epitaph. Thy course, through grace, is one of faith, and sight seldom cheers thee; this has also been the pathway of the brightest and the best. Faith was the orbit in which these stars of the first magnitude moved all the time of their shining here; and happy art thou that it is thine. Look anew to-night to Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith, and thank him for giving thee like precious faith with souls now in glory. (Spurgeon, C. H.)

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### **Hebrews 11:13 Tramps And Pilgrims**

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The Lord is preparing you and me for eternity, and everything we do is full of significance. Though this earth is not our permanent place of habitation, we are not aimless vagabonds. We are to be sojourners who live responsibly as we travel to our prepared destination. We have a heavenly Father who loves us and will welcome us into that home made ready by our Savior. —Herbert Vander Lugt

A few more watches keeping,  
A few more foes to down,  
As pilgrims brave we journey  
To win the victor's crown! —Bosch

### **Don't drive your stakes too deep; we're moving in the morning!**

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#### **Hebrews 11:13 Golden Gods**

God had seized the attention of Pharaoh and the Egyptians with a series of plagues. Now they were dying to be rid of their Hebrew slaves. But God didn't want the Israelites to leave Egypt empty-handed. After all, they had 400 years of wages due them. So they asked their former masters for articles of silver, gold, and clothing, and they got them. Exodus 12:36 says that the Israelites "plundered the Egyptians."

It wasn't long, however, until God's people fell into idolatry. They used their gold to make a golden calf, which they worshiped while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving God's law (32:1-4).

This tragic experience highlights the tension that Christians are required to maintain regarding their possessions. There is much in our society that we enjoy, but material things also pose grave dangers when we use them thoughtlessly. Os Guinness says that we are "free to utilize" but "forbidden to idolize." We are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13), and we must not become so enamored with "the riches of Egypt" that we grow complacent and forget our true calling.

Are we using our material blessings to serve the Lord? Or have we become slaves to them?—Haddon W. Robinson

I have an old nature that noisily clamors  
To satisfy empty desire;  
But God in His goodness has sent me a Helper  
Who whispers, "Your calling is higher." —Gustafson

### **Gold can be a helpful servant but a cruel master**

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**Hebrews 11:16 J C Philpot** - "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." Hebrews 11:16

In desiring a better country these ancient pilgrims wanted something heavenly, something that tasted of God, savored of God, smelt of God, and was given of God--a heavenly religion, a spiritual faith, a gracious hope, and a love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit--something which came from heaven and led to heaven; which gave heavenly feelings, heavenly sensations, heavenly delights, and heavenly joys, whereby the heart was purified from the love of sin, carnality, and worldliness by having something sweeter to taste, better to love, and more holy to enjoy.

It is these heavenly visitations, droppings-in of the favor, goodness, and mercy of God, which keep the soul alive in its many deaths, sweeten it amid its many bitters, hold it up amid its many sinkings, and keep it from being drowned while conflicting with many waters.

A carnal mind has no taste for heavenly things, no sweet delight in the word of God; no delight in the Lord Jesus as revealing himself in the word; no delight in closet duties, secret meditation, searching the Scriptures, communion with God, or even in the company of God's dear family. There must be a 'heavenly element' in the soul to understand, realize, enjoy, and delight in heavenly things. The Holy Spirit must have wrought in us a new heart, a new nature, capable of understanding, enjoying, and delighting in heavenly realities, as containing in them, that which is sweet and precious to the soul.

They desired, therefore, a better country, that is, a heavenly, a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God; where pleasures are at God's right hand for evermore; where the pure river of the water of life ever flows; where the tree grows on which



are found leaves for the healing of the nations; such a city as John describes in the book of Revelation, where all is happiness, harmony, and peace.

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#### **When we find the path thorny, and the journey toilsome ("Every Day!" Author unknown, 1872)**

"They were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." Hebrews 11:16

"Here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come!" Hebrews 13:14

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city!" Revelation 22:14

God has prepared a city for His redeemed people. Towards that city we are ever journeying. And as we are but sojourners, as our citizenship is in Heaven — let us manifest the pilgrim spirit. While we thankfully use and enjoy the accommodations along the way, let it plainly appear that we do not regard this transient world as our home — but that our affections are set supremely on things which are above. Let it be manifest that we act from higher principles than those which govern the men of this poor world. May our companions, our pleasures, and our spirit plainly show that we are not of the earth — but that we are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

As sojourners, let us patiently endure the trials of the way. If we are faithful witnesses for the Lord — we must expect the world's scorn. But like Moses, may we esteem reproach for Christ as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And when we find the path thorny, and the journey toilsome — let us remember that it is short, and that,

"Nightly we pitch our moving tent  
A day's march nearer home!"

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims — abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul!" 1 Peter 2:11

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#### **Hebrews 11:17-18 Abraham's Trial - James Smith, 1860**

Great and godly men have always been tried men; and generally the greater the grace, and the more elevated the station — the greater the trials. We sometimes overlook this, when we long to be exalted, and employed in public. Little men make much, and talk much of little trials; but great men, very gracious men, suffer in silence, and hide their sorrows from others. How much we read of the trials of the Lord's people in his word, the tests they were put to, the crosses they had to carry, the faith they exercised, the courage they displayed, and the patience they manifested.

How honorably Paul speaks of Abraham, "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called." Hebrews 11:17,18.

Abraham's Trial. "God tested Abraham." To test here is to try, to examine, to prove if genuine, if strong. The nature of some things have to be proved, and the strength of others, because there are counterfeits. There is counterfeit grace, and weak grace. God therefore tries grace, and proves it to be genuine, he tries it also that we may know its strength. God had promised Abraham a son, he had waited long, he had received the son promised, and that son was the joy of his heart, and the sunshine of his house. He was now near to manhood, a fine, healthy, lovely lad — enthroned in his mother's heart, and the stay of his father's old age. God now requires that son to be given up — to be given up in sacrifice — to be sacrificed by his father's own hand!

Think of sacrificing a son, an only son, a son such as Isaac was. Yet Abraham was required to take him from his home, travel with him three days, and at the end of that time, offer him as a sacrifice on the top of the mountain pointed out. This was the trial, and the command seems to have come upon him suddenly, and when it was not at all expected. Perhaps just after the father and son had been enjoying each other's company and conversation in a particular way. How mysterious often are the ways of God! How frequently the command is given, or the sacrifice required, without any reason being assigned. Abraham was thus tried, now observe,

His honorable conduct. "He offered up Isaac." He offered him up as required. He offered him up where he was directed. He offered him up without questioning, or asking the reason why — without interceding, that his Isaac may be spared — without praying to be spared the trial. He seems to have obeyed the command readily — without hesitation or delay; calmly — without excitement or confusion; piously — from a right motive, and that God may be glorified; consistently — with his profession, character, and high standing as the friend of God. How much depends on the spirit in which we present our sacrifices! How frequently all is spoiled by

the motive from which, or the manner in which, we present our offerings to God. How much more ready we are to receive from God, than we are to return anything to God. We laugh when he gives us our Isaacs — but we weep when he requires us to return them to him; whereas we should be as willing to surrender, as to receive. Notice now,

The principle of action. "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac."

He believed God's word when he required the sacrifice, as much as he did when he promised him a son. Faith should be as much exercised on the commands of God, that we may do them; as on the promises of God, that we may expect him to fulfill them.

He admitted God's right. That he had a right to claim, and dispose of all that he possessed, even his Isaac. He allowed that it was proper, that God should do as he would, with his own.

He revered God's authority. Strong faith, always inspires us with deep reverence; it is presumption that inclines us to trifle, or take liberties with God. True faith always bows to the authority of God, while it believes the love, and trusts in the promises of God.

He had confidence in God a goodness and power, and therefore felt persuaded that what he required was good, and if necessary that his son could be restored to him from the jaws of death.

He obeyed God's command, and obeyed without reasoning, or objecting. This is what faith always does, and is therefore the root of all good works. In proportion as we steadily believe the promise — we shall diligently, and devoutly, obey the command. Faith will always do so, and thus honor and glorify God its author.

Isaac was a type of Jesus. Isaac was offered up in purpose and intention by his father — but Jesus was really and truly put to death by his Father's sword, as a sacrifice to his Father's justice. The sacrifice of Isaac, prefigured the sacrifice of Jesus, who so many years after, as the only begotten Son of God, died the just for the unjust, near the same spot.

Abraham is an example to all who believe. An example of faith — in that he believed what God said, expected what God had promised, and sacrificed what God required. An example of acquiescence — in that he acquiesced in God's will, even when that will required the sacrifice of his only, his tenderly beloved child. What a reproof to thousands who profess to have like precious faith with Abraham. What a reproof to us.

Abraham is an example of surrendering all to God. He kept nothing back. With him there were no exceptions. He held all he had as the Lord's. He held all he had for the Lord. He was therefore ready to surrender at any time, whatever the Lord required of him.

Abraham is an example of ready obedience. Like David, he made haste and delayed not to keep God's commandments. With him there was no asking, "what will others say?" or "why should God require this?" Pride, prejudice, or passion, were not consulted; but God's will was law, God's word was his rule. He acted because God commanded, and just so should we. We never lose by giving up what God requires, for whatever he takes from us — he always gives us something better in its place. If he take away temporals — he will give us spirituals; and if he take away a son — he will give us himself. Indeed he very generally takes away our idols — in order that he may fill the throne of the affections, and reign and rule alone.

Beloved, have you an Isaac? If so, are you prepared to part with it — to sacrifice it, if God calls for it? You profess, if you are a believer, to have surrendered all at God's throne; and to have consecrated all at the Savior's cross. Be faithful then, and if you consult your own happiness, or wish to live to God's glory and praise — hold everything temporal with a loose hand, and be ready to sacrifice any, and every Isaac, if the Lord should call for it at your hands!

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### Hebrews 11:17-31 Unlikely Heroes

The Lord makes heroes out of very unlikely people. One such person is Angie Garber. She was born with a severe facial deformity. The surgery to correct her appearance left her deaf in one ear.

In her teens, Angie contracted polio. She survived, but after months of agonizing therapy and exercise her left leg and arm remained weak. During this difficult time her mother became ill. Angie and one of her sisters cared for their mom till she died.

Her brother George, who had done more to encourage Angie than any other person, died in an accident. And then crop failure made it necessary to sell the family farm.

But through it all, Angie kept praying that she could someday serve the Lord as a missionary-teacher. God honored her desire, and about 5 years after her mother's death Angie began her life's work as a teacher for the Navajo Mission. She became such an effective Christian worker that two books have been written about her. Today her happy face reflects her inner joy. Angie faced incredible obstacles in her walk of faith. Yet, like the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, she continued to trust God.

If you're discouraged and feel like giving up, remember, God makes spiritual heroes out of unlikely people. --H V Lugt

All God's testings have a purpose--  
Someday you will see the light;  
All He asks is that you trust Him,  
Walk by faith and not by sight. --Zoller

**Suffering can prepare ordinary Christians for extraordinary service.**

### **Hebrews 11:21 My Staff**

An antique rack in the entryway to our home holds the canes and walking-sticks of several generations of our family. My favorite is a slender staff with a gold-plated knob engraved with the initials "DHR." It belonged to my wife Carolyn's great-grandfather, Daniel Henry Rankin. Curiously, his initials are the same as mine.

In my study is another collection: my father's peeled, apple-wood walking stick, among others. And in a barrel in our garage there's an assortment of cross-country ski poles, wading wands, and trekking sticks I've gathered over the years. One of these days, I'll trade them all in for a walker. I'll always need something or someone to lean on.

I'm reminded of the old patriarch Jacob, once strong, now humbled and utterly dependent on God. When he was dying, by faith he "worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff" (Hebrews 11:21).

As I grow older, I'm learning to lean more on God and His faithfulness. Over the years, He has "held me by my right hand." He is guiding me with His counsel, and afterward He will "receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:23-24).

Shakespeare said it well: God is "the very staff of my age, my very prop." —David H. Roper

Our vigor is fleeting, our best years are brief,  
Our youth passes quickly—time's ever a thief;  
But hope yet becomes us—death's sting holds no power;  
We have a Redeemer—an unfailing Tower. —Gustafson

**Learning of our weakness teaches us to lean on God's strength**

### **Hebrews 11:25 I Was Deceived**

It was dusk. My wife and I had just strolled across the famous Charles Bridge in Prague when a man approached us with a wad of money in his hand. "Forty-two Czech korunas for one dollar," he said. The official rate was about 35Ks for one US dollar. So I exchanged 50 dollars for 2,100 Czech korunas.

That evening I told my son about my good fortune. "Dad, I should have told you," he apologized. "Never exchange money on the street." We looked at the bills. The 100K note was a good Czech bill, but the two 1,000K bills were worthless. They looked like Czech money but were Bulgarian notes no longer in circulation. I had been deceived—and robbed!

Satan employs similar tactics (John 8:44). He capitalizes on the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13), using its "passing pleasures" (Hebrews 11:25) to hide the pain that always follows. Sin may be attractive, even offering something that in and of itself is good—but behind it is deception.

Our best defense against that deception is to have a growing knowledge of God's Word. As we follow the psalmist's example, we'll keep from being deceived by sin: "Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11). —Dennis J. De Haan

Give me, O Lord, a strong desire  
To look within Your Word each day;  
Help me to hide it in my heart,  
Lest from its truth my feet would stray. —Branon

**God's truth uncovers Satan's lies.**

### **Hebrews 11:25 Pleasure Versus Joy**

The world offers "passing pleasures" (Hebrews 11:25), but the Lord Jesus offers to give us full and lasting joy (John 15:11). Pleasure is dependent on circumstances, but joy is inward and is not disturbed by one's environment.

Pleasure is always changing, but joy is constant! Worldly delights are often followed by depression. True joy is grounded in Jesus Christ, who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

To keep experiencing pleasure, we must run from one stimulus to another, for it refuses to be permanently grasped. Joy is just the opposite. It is a gift we receive from God.

Pleasure is built on self-seeking, but joy is based on self-sacrifice. The more we pursue self-gratification, the more empty we feel. If a pint of pleasure gives momentary happiness today, a gallon of excitement and thrills is necessary for the same effect tomorrow. Joy, however, is based on the sacrificial giving of ourselves. As we learn what it means to focus on the needs of others, we find greater fulfillment in God Himself, who meets our every need.

Only when you seek the things of Christ can you find abiding joy. —Henry G. Bosch

There is joy beyond all measure  
In abiding in the Lord;  
It is promised most abundant  
And enduring in His Word. —McQuat

### **For joy that will last, always put Christ first**

#### **Hebrews 11:30 Fleeting Opportunity**

As a sculptor showed a visitor some marble figures displayed in his studio, an unusual sculpture caught the guest's attention. It had two peculiar features. Where the statue's face normally would have been, the sculptor had chiseled a covering of hair, and on both feet were wings.

"What is the name of this one?" asked the visitor.

"Opportunity," the artist answered.

"Why is its face hidden?"

"Because," said the craftsman, "we seldom know opportunity when he comes to us."

"And why does he have wings on his feet?"

"Because he is soon gone, and once gone, he cannot be overtaken."

The apostle Paul spoke of the quickly passing nature of opportunity in Ephesians 5:16. The word time used in this verse can also be translated "opportunity"—suggesting occasions for accomplishing high and noble purposes. But what are these opportunities? They are brief moments of personal contact—the passing incident, the turn of a conversation, or the "chance" meeting of an old acquaintance. Such times present golden opportunities for caring, for witnessing, for eternal good.

Alexander Maclaren, the noted Baptist preacher from England, said,

"Every moment of life is granted us for one purpose: becoming like our dear Lord. That ultimate, all-embracing end is reached through a multitude of near and intermediate ones."

Like the young shepherd David, when our faith is strong we will have the wisdom and courage to see every obstacle as an opportunity. —P. R. Van Gorder

To believe only possibilities, is not faith, but mere Philosophy. —Sir Thomas Browne

#### **Hebrews 11:30 The Bible Stands!**

Unbelievers have long scoffed at the biblical story of the fall of the ancient city of Jericho. That's why I was delighted to see this headline on the front page of the newspaper:

#### **NEW STUDY BACKS BIBLICAL VERSION OF JERICHO'S DEMISE**

The Associated Press article began, "The walls of Jericho did come tumbling down as recounted in the Bible, according to an archaeological study." Archaeologist Bryant G. Wood of the University of Toronto said, "When we compare the archaeological evidence at Jericho with the biblical narrative describing the Israelite destruction of Jericho, we find remarkable agreement." Wood noted that the Bible places the event after spring harvest and indicates that the Israelites burned the city—both facts confirmed by the archaeological remains. Once again, archaeology bears testimony to the truthfulness of Scripture.

Our belief in the authenticity of the Bible does not depend on scientific research but on its claim to be God's Word. As 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." We can therefore have complete confidence in what it says.

It's a fact—the walls of Jericho did indeed fall. The Bible stands!—Richard De Haan

The Bible stands like a mountain towering  
Far above the works of men;  
Its truth by none ever was refuted,  
And destroy it they never can. —Lillenas  
©1917, 1945 Hope Publishing Co.

**To the wise, God's Word is sufficient.**

#### **Hebrews 11:30 BELIEVING GOD**

In the story about Joshua and the city of Jericho, we have a most vivid illustration of faith. God commanded Joshua to gather all the men of war and have them march around Jericho once a day for six days. Then, on the seventh day, they were to compass the city seven times, after which the priests were to blow with the trumpets and all the people were to shout with a great shout. The Lord promised Joshua that if they did this, the walls of the city would fall down flat.

Have you ever tried to put yourself in Joshua's place, and imagine how you would have reacted to such a command? When the Lord gave him these instructions, do you suppose Joshua responded: "Lord, that's a reasonable thing to do. In fact, I'm rather ashamed of myself that I didn't devise such a brilliant plan in the first place. It really makes a lot of sense." Of course, he said nothing of the kind, simply because God's command was not a "reasonable" one to Joshua's mind. That is, he couldn't take out his "slide rule" and calculate scientifically that the predicted results would necessarily follow such actions. And yet, even though some would have ruled it an insane plan thus to attempt the conquest of Jericho, Joshua obeyed God anyway, simply because he had faith! Yes, he was willing to rely on the word of the Lord, despite the fact that it seemed contrary to his own understanding of things. That's what God expects of us today. He wants us to believe His Word — to accept the Bible record in its entirety — whether we can comprehend it or not. There is much in the Book we cannot explain: for example, the Trinity, the virgin birth, Christ's substitutionary death, His resurrection, and His coming again; yet we believe these things with all our heart just because God says so! Remember, without such faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

The tow'ring walls of Jericho did seem a barrier strong,  
Yet trumpet blasts and shouts of faith did conquer it ere long;  
And so today as we go 'round our Jerichos of doubt,  
Let's trust the Lord for victory; He knows what He's about! —H.G.B.

**God said it, I believe it; that settles it!**

#### **Hebrews 11:32-33 THE ROLL OF FAITH**

FAITH IS the link between our souls and God. It is the capacity of entering into fellowship with the Eternal Love and Power, so that we are able to do all things with the sense that it is not we who do them, but God in us and with us. Faith is the open door and window towards God. In faith our heart goes out towards God in clinging dependence, and God comes in to strengthen us with His Divine fullness.

In human life, when we trust a man, we draw from him all that he is able to supply; in the Divine life, faith draws upon the resources of God, so that they flow freely into our nature, and the results of our life-work are immensely increased. Faith is possible amid a great deal of ignorance. It is clear that Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah were ignorant of the truth which the Gospel has revealed, and yet we learn that their work was largely due to their faith. Dispensations come and go; the revelation of God grows from less to more; but the attitude of faith is always the same--in the simple woman that touched the hem of Christ's garment, as in St. John the beloved disciple, who had years of training in Christ's School.

Faith achieves very different results. In some, it produces the heroic strength that turns the battle from the gate; in some, the passive suffering that endures the long ordeal of pain. Here, it turns the edge of the sword; there, shuts the mouths of lions. We know how electric force may be applied to all the various machinery of human life. In one place used for the beaming light, in another to drive the motor car, or to flash the message of music and speech from one continent to another. So Faith is able to appropriate God's might for any purpose that lies within the compass of the life-task, whether active or passive. (See Heb11:32-34, Heb11:35-39.)

God bears a witness to all who trust Him. He never fails us in the hour of need. His response is the echo of our appeal. As soon as the uplifted arm of the tramcar touches the overhead wire, there is the spark, and the immediate entrance of electric power. So God

answers faith.

## PRAYER

O God, we are full of need, but we have learnt that Thou givest power to the faint and to those that have no right. Change our weakness into Thy strength; our ignorance into Thy wisdom; our changefulness into Thine everlasting constancy. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

## Hebrews 11:34 WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS

I'm always amused when I watch the loons lift into flight off Piatt Lake in Michigan's upper peninsula. They half-run, half-flap across the water for hundreds of feet before getting enough speed to lift into the air. I wondered why until I learned that unlike most birds, loons have solid bones. Their added weight makes it difficult for them to get airborne.

I also learned that loons are clumsy on land because their legs are set farther back on their bodies than other birds. Walking is so difficult that many loons simply scoot across land to their nesting places. But these disadvantages -- heavy bones, legs set far back - - are also tremendous advantages. Because of their weight and leg placement, loons can dive deeper, farther, and faster. This is essential for catching fish and escaping predators.

What we see as disadvantages in our lives can be turned into advantages, and apparent weaknesses can be transformed into strengths. That was true of the apostle Paul, whose "thorn in the flesh" became an opportunity for God's strength to be seen in his weakness (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

Is a weakness holding you down? Is it shyness or a physical limitation? Ask God to turn it into a strength for His glory.- David C. Egner

Inadequate but mighty --  
How strange, yet wholly true!  
Weak persons filled with power  
The father's work shall do.-- Henry G. Bosch

**Our limited potential accents God's limitless power.**

## Hebrews 11:34 The Treasure Chest

When I was a young girl, my mother often let me rummage through her button box as I recovered from an illness. It always cheered me to come across old, familiar buttons and remember the garments they once adorned. I especially liked it when she picked out an old, overlooked button and used it again.

Similarly, I often leaf through my Bible during distressing times and recall familiar promises that have strengthened me. But I'm always encouraged to find help from promises I've never noticed before.

I remember one dark morning during my husband's terminal illness when I was looking for a word from God to sustain me in our painful circumstances. In Hebrews 11, I noted that God had rescued His suffering people in some very dramatic ways. Yet I couldn't always identify with their particular situations. Then I read about some who "out of weakness were made strong" (v.34). God used that phrase to assure me that I too could be made strong in my weakness. At that very moment I began sensing His strength, and my faith was renewed.

Are you being tested today? Remember, there are many promises in the Bible, God's treasure chest. Generations have proven them true, and so can you. —Joanie Yoder

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,  
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,  
By the living word of God I shall prevail,  
Standing on the promises of God. —Carter

**God's promises are treasures waiting to be discovered**

## Hebrews 11:35-40 Spiritual Prosperity

The Bible tells us that God will supply all our needs (Phil. 4:19). Because His resources are limitless, He is able to do that for everybody who comes to Him in faith.

Do we then have the right to expect that we will never be sick or hungry or in want? That's the teaching of some preachers today.

One speaker and author who promotes a health-and-wealth gospel has actually written: "The Word of God simply reveals that lack and poverty are not in line with God's will for the obedient ... God's will is prosperity."

According to that teaching, some of the great examples of faith portrayed in Hebrews 11, the Bible's Hall of Fame, must have been disobedient to God and His will. Verses 37 and 38 record that "they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ... They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth."

Surely God is concerned for our total welfare, yet He knows best when to withhold and when to bestow His provisions. His ultimate concern is for our spiritual health. We must therefore trust Him and acknowledge that adversity sometimes may be God's means of promoting our spiritual prosperity. --V C Grounds

O Lord, I would not ask You why  
These trials must come my way,  
But what is there for me to learn  
Of Your great love, I pray. --DJD

**There is no education like adversity.**

### **Hebrews 11:37 God's Comfort**

As you turn through the pages of your Bible, you may be surprised by how little God seems to care for the ease and comfort of His saints.

Take those heroic characters of the Old Testament who faced danger and risked death rather than be disloyal to Him. Did God coddle them? Did He protect them from the rude winds of life? The writer to the Hebrews gives us the answer: "They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Heb. 11:37). So much for comfort!

In the New Testament too, there seems to be this strange unconcern for our comfort. When Jesus prayed for His followers just before His execution, He didn't plead that the Father would shelter and protect them. Instead He said, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (Jn. 17:15). Our Lord Jesus was concerned not for their comfort but for their character.

Don't think that God is unconcerned about what happens to you. He cares more about what happens in you so He can accomplish His purposes through you. --H W Robinson

God does not shield us from the pain  
That sin has spread throughout the race;  
For if He did, how could we know  
His depths of wisdom, love, and grace? --DJD

**God does not keep us from life's storms--  
He walks with us through them.**

### **Hebrews 11:39 A Good Testimony**

Lists can be boring, but not the one in Hebrews 11. It's an impressive list of Old Testament believers and their amazing accomplishments. However, the writer kept interspersing the words "by faith," for his emphasis was strictly faith, not fame. Through faith these people obtained a good testimony (v.39), but was there always a good outcome?

In verses 33-35, the writer highlighted those who by faith subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, and escaped the edge of the sword. Then he mentioned "others" who were tortured and killed, those for whom sudden reprieves never came (He 11:35, 36, 37, 38). Did they obtain a bad testimony? No! Verse 39 says that "all these"—both the delivered and the undelivered—obtained a good testimony, for all had acted in faith.

I'm certain that all had asked the Lord for help. But some received deliverance, and others received an answer similar to the one given to Paul when he pleaded for his "thorn" to be removed: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Corinthians 12:9).

Be greatly encouraged! Whenever you act in faith and in God's strength, you are obtaining a good testimony before Him—no matter what the outcome. —Joanie Yoder

Let us then be true and faithful,

Trusting, serving, every day;  
Just one glimpse of Him in glory  
Will the toils of life repay. —Hewitt

**Faithfulness is God's standard for a good testimony.**

#### **Hebrews 11:39 Remembered**

After the South lost the US Civil War, John Wilkes Booth wanted to be remembered as its avenger against the North. Some scholars speculate that because he was an actor, Booth's planned assassination of President Lincoln was, in his mind, his greatest "performance."

Ironically, John Wilkes Booth's place in history is that of a villain. He is remembered for taking the life of an unarmed Lincoln with a gunshot to the back of the head. In contrast, Abraham Lincoln is remembered as the president who preserved the Union, freed the slaves, and exhibited "malice toward none and charity for all" (Second Inaugural Address).

The redeemed sinners listed in Hebrews 11 are all remembered for one common virtue: "All these ... obtained a good testimony through faith" (He 11:39). Long after their deaths, the record of their lives of faith and obedience still inspire us today.

Few of us will be recorded in history books after we leave this world. But all of us will leave behind memories with our families and friends. Those closest to us are watching our response to God through times of testing and blessing.

Are you living in faith and obedience to Him? What will be the legacy of your life? —Dennis Fisher

Even after we have left  
This earthly scene below,  
The witness of our life can speak  
Of Christ, whom all can know. —D. De Haan

**The memory of a godly life speaks more eloquently than words.**

#### **Hebrews 11:40 They without us should not be made perfect.**

This chapter proves that the saints of all ages are essentially one. There is a link which unites them; a thrill which passes from hand to hand around the circle. One theme for many voices; one attitude for many faces; one inspiration for many hearts. The saints that lived before the Advent and those that have lived since are one in their faith in the living God making the unseen visible, the distant near, and seeing the eternal through the transient and ephemeral.

And now heaven waits. Its joys are not complete, its rapture not full. The blessed are blessed; but there is yet a margin between what they are and what they will be — between what they enjoy, and what they may enjoy. The choir is not full, and the anthem cannot be fully rendered till our voices blend in it. There is a pause, a halt, an expectancy, an incompleteness, till we come. Your dear ones want you to be there. They have not gone far into the heart of God's bliss, but are lingering near the gate till you have joined them.

From Switzerland your friends write you to say it is perfectly beautiful, but "it will be better when you join us; we are reserving the best excursions till you arrive; we are incomplete without you; make haste." It is thus that the blessed await us. The spirit of Heaven is well represented by the courtesy of the old prophet, who would not sit down to meat with Jesse and his sons, till David, the youngest, had come thither also. And when the whole family is gathered, there will be a perfecting indeed, from which no element shall be wanting.

Oh rapture of eternal joy! We stretch out our hands in yearning desire, and doing so touch other hands reached towards ours! (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily).