

Hebrews 11:1-7 - God's Hall of Fame,

“For yet a little while, and He (Jesus Christ) who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just (by faith) shall live by faith (believing that He is coming to save us and to judge the world)” (Hebrews 10:37-39).

What does it mean to LIVE BY FAITH?

What is the kind of faith that pleases God - that would cause God to write a good report on you? These questions are now answered in Hebrews 11 by illustrations from the lives of the Old Testament Heroes of Faith who ‘**obtained a good testimony** (report)’ from God (v2), because of their FAITH that was revealed and proven through their ACTIONS. Their faith made them stand out in an evil world. These Pioneers teach us the basic principles of the life of faith. From their example we learn what causes God to give a good report.

First he tells us what Faith is:

“Now faith is the substance (assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction) of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is trusting in the invisible God sure that He is faithful to His Word.

Faith pleases God and proves its genuineness in good works: **“For by it the elders (the heroes of faith) obtained a good testimony” (v2).**

Through faith we see all life is governed by God and His Word:

“By faith we understand that the worlds (ages) were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (v3).

Faith causes us to understand that ultimate realities are spiritual and are determined and revealed by the Word. It is our 6th sense that contacts and joins us to God, Who is beyond the reach of our senses, seeing past the visible to the invisible ultimate reality. Living by faith is having an invisible Source, leaning on an invisible power, trusting an invisible means of support.

The Life of Faith is illustrated by the Men of Faith in Hebrews 11 (where God gives His testimony to them). This Hall of Fame is only a partial listing for God wants to add your name and deeds to the list! This passage concludes with: **“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses (those who have gone before us - described in chapter 11), let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus (our main example of faith), the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls”** (Hebrews 12:1-3). The greatest hero of faith is Jesus Himself, from whose example we learn ENDURANCE under attack, trial and pressure - the proof of real faith.

1. ABEL teaches us true FAITH in God must be based in the BLOOD of Christ (v4):

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts and through it he being dead still speaks.”

Genesis 4:2-8: “Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat (sacrificial lambs). And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well (if you come to me through blood not works), will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well (if you have a

bloodless man-made religion of works - 'I'll do it my way'),
SIN (the sin-nature in his flesh) **lies at the door. And its desire is for** (to dominate) **you, but you should rule over it** (by God's grace)"

God warns Cain that if He fails to come to God in the way God has decreed (through blood) and to avail himself of God's grace, he will be dominated by sin. When people say: 'Be free, just do whatever you feel like doing, vent your anger, it's O.K', they are giving a license for the sin-nature to take control. This is the way of Cain: to walk after the flesh independent of God and His Word, resulting in sin taking them over. **"Now Cain talked with Abel his brother."** (Cain complained to Abel against God but Abel witnessed to him, reminding him that they must come to God and receive forgiveness through blood, because of sin. He would have told him about Adam's teaching on this). **"And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him."** Cain rejected God's Word and came under full control of sin. He was overwhelmed with anger for Abel and for God:
'God, you want blood, I give you blood!'

Down the ages CAIN has been killing ABEL.

Unbelievers are still persecuting and killing true believers.

ABEL = the Believer, who trusts in the BLOOD SACRIFICE (representing Christ and His Blood) for grace (the forgiveness of sins and life with God).

CAIN = those who reject SALVATION through Blood, replacing it by a man-centred religion and salvation. As a result they become dominated by SIN and hate (murder) fills their heart and lives - especially towards those Believers who remind them of God's righteousness.

God by His Word revealed from the beginning (as of first importance) that SALVATION from sin is only through innocent BLOOD.

“According to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission (forgiveness)” (Hebrews 9:22). All the Blood sacrifices (which were instituted by God) signified the Blood of Jesus. God was teaching man that this is the only remedy for sin. For justice demands that sin must be punished. We can either pay the penalty (death) ourselves or we can let someone else (a substitute) pay the price. But who would be able or willing to pay such a price and die for the sins of all mankind? Only One, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the final sacrifice! Therefore, if a man rejects the grace of God made available on the basis of the Blood of Christ, He cannot help but come under the power of sin and God’s judgement upon sin (Hell). Cain is the blueprint for all those who make this choice.

In the Teaching of Adam to mankind (given in Genesis 2:4b-5:1a) the necessity of salvation through the Blood of Christ was made clear. The Book of Adam closes with: **“This is the book (record) of the generations (history or origins) of Adam”** (Genesis 5:1a). Thus this is Adam’s signature at the end of the book he wrote.

SUMMARY of Adam’s teaching:

(1) God created man in perfection to have fellowship with Him (Genesis 2:6-25, 3:8).

(2) Man sinned and was cut off from the Presence of a righteous God (3:1-8). They became aware of their need for a covering (atonement) before God because of sin: **“The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked”** (v7), for they were afraid of God’s righteous judgement upon their sin (v8).

(3) Man’s solution was a bloodless salvation(a covering of fig-leaves) but it had no power to save: **“they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings”** (v7). If you you try and stand before God in your good-works (filthy-rags) you are like Adam in his

fig-leaves! **“When they heard the Lord walking in the garden they hid themselves from His presence”** (v8).

"I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself" (v10). Man's works and self-made religion (fig-leaves) are useless in the Presence of God.

(4) God still loved sinful man and reached out to restore him (v9). God in His love for the sinner provided a covering with innocent blood: **“For Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them”** (v21).

This was the FIRST SHEDDING OF BLOOD.

God was telling man that the only effective covering of sin would be through the death and blood of an innocent substitute - such was the terrible nature of sin and its penalty. Here the use of animals for clothing was sanctioned -but not for food yet. God covered them in another's blood but the blood of an mere animal could never save. This spoke of the blood of the Coming Messiah- Jesus. So along with this Blood sacrifice, He prophesied the coming of Messiah, his sacrificial death and resulting victory over sin and satan:

“I will put enmity between you (satan) and the woman, and between your seed (sin) and her Seed (Messiah); He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (v15). So God preached the Gospel to Adam who then taught his descendants.

(5) Man must accept God's blood provision or be spiritually naked - a lost soul forever. Adam and Eve accepted God's covering and were saved and passed on the teaching of SALVATION by BLOOD to their descendants. Abel accepted it by faith and was saved but Cain knew better! Since then Blood sacrifice and covenant has been the deepest thing in the human understanding. Modern man thinks he is superior and has advanced beyond primitive religion but he is actually the most ignorant and lost, for since the fall there is no true faith in God or salvation without blood.

Man was expelled from Eden for his own benefit (v22), signifying exclusion from the full blessing of God until the Messiah comes and opens the gates of Heaven for man again. **Are you a Cain or an Abel?** You must accept and trust the Blood of Christ as only basis for your forgiveness, your standing before God, your access to God, and all your blessing, healing and salvation. This is the necessary first step in the life of faith. You must accept the Blood for yourself.

The blood of every martyr or murder/abortion victim calls out for judgement: **“The Lord said to Cain, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother's BLOOD cries out to Me (for judgement) from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand’”** (4:9-11). But thank God, the Blood of Jesus speaks Mercy because He has taken our judgement on himself: **“You have come... to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the Blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel”**(Hebrews 12:22-24). If you accept the powerful Blood of Jesus, then Mercy will overcome Judgement.

Thus Abel gave us the first lesson for our life of faith.

Faith must be based in the Blood Atonement of Christ. Because of sin, our life and blessing in God cannot be based upon our own righteousness, but only by trusting in God's grace, available through the Blood of Christ. He paid the price in full for our salvation.

2. ENOCH - FAITH leads to a life of FELLOWSHIP with God.

Enoch gives us our second key ingredient of a life of faith:

“By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (v5,6).

Enoch's faith pleased God and the main way he showed his faith was in coming to God continually, believing in God's goodness, believing that every time he would draw close to God, God would draw close to him and reward him. Enoch shows us FAITH for FELLOWSHIP, faith to come close to God and spend time with Him. Enoch teaches us that the main purpose of faith is not for healing or miracles but to have intimate fellowship with God, for we were created for this.

This is confirmed when we read his story in Genesis 5:21-24:

“Enoch lived 65 years, and begot Methuselah

(which means ‘*when he dies it (the Flood) shall come (fall).*’

After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years.”

It seems that in this year Enoch had a life-changing encounter with God receiving a revelation of the coming judgements of God (Jude 14,15). His naming of Methusaleh was prophetic, for the Flood came in the very year he died! From that year on, the special thing about Enoch was that he **walked with God**. It was so impressive that Enoch could constantly walk with God every day for 300 years in an increasingly evil world under imminent judgement!

“So all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” He walked with God, pleasing God by his faith by coming to God with expectancy and God showed His pleasure with Enoch by taking him to be with Him forever. Smith Wigglesworth said that Enoch walked with God every day. One day he got so far out in the Spirit that God said to him: ***‘We are closer to My place than yours, so why don't you just come home with Me.’*** So Enoch said O.K. He was the first man raptured in the Bible! One day he just disappeared before their eyes. They sent out search parties but he could not be found.

Enoch is our example especially for us in this final, rapture-Generation Enoch is a type of the Rapture of the Church. By faith we are to walk in daily fellowship with God, so that when Jesus

comes for us, (to take us to be with Him forever) we will be ready. We will then have the same testimony as Enoch who walked with God and was raptured. Jesus said to us (His Bride): **"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also** (this speaks of eternal fellowship, our fellowship with God in this life is just a preparation and anticipation of our future face-to-face fellowship with the Lord)" (John 14:1).

For those walking with the Lord, He will return and take them to be with Him forever so that this fellowship may be brought to fullness (consummated). Thus the rapture will be in a moment of great joy. **"The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord"** (1Thessalonians 4:16-17).

As Enoch warned his generation as a prophet about the judgement of God that was coming upon the whole world, so we are to warn our generation that soon the time of judgement called the Tribulation will come upon the whole earth. As Enoch was raptured before judgement fell, so we (the true Church) will be raptured before judgement falls upon an unbelieving world, for we (believers) are not appointed to endure God's wrath but to be with Him in sweet fellowship forever.

3. NOAH - FAITH WITNESSES TO A LOST GENERATION.

Noah teaches us the third principle of a life of faith:

"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an Ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (v7).

“When the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water” (1Peter 3:20).

“God did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly” (2Peter 2:5).

Noah has a good faith-report from God because believing that God’s judgement was coming, he was concerned for the salvation of the lost. He gave his life for the work of the Lord -
by **(1) WITNESSING** (despite the ridicule and hostility against him) and **(2) by BUILDING AN ARK** in obedience to God which was **a PLACE OF SAFETY and SALVATION** for the lost to come into and be saved (which also served as an amazing visual-aid getting people’s attention so when they asked about it he could witness to them, which would only have increased the attacks against him). By giving them God’s Word and providing a place of salvation for them Noah removed all their excuses for rejecting God. In this way he ‘condemned the world.’

Noah is a type and example for New-Testament believers, especially for us who live in the generation just before the Rapture. Jesus said:

"As the days of Noah were, so also will the Coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the Ark, and did not know until the Flood came and took them all away, so also will the Coming of the Son of Man be (for at the Rapture believers will disappear from view as Noah did and this will be followed immediately by the Flood of the Tribulation). Then two men will be in the field: one (the believer) will be taken (in the Rapture) and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one (the believer) will be taken (in the Rapture) and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know

what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming (like a thief comes unannounced with the world in darkness to take the precious things (the believers) from the earth) **at an hour you do not expect”** (Matthew 24:37-44).

To the world Jesus will come in the Rapture as a thief in the night, but He is only taking what belongs to Him. In this comparison the world-wide judgements of the Tribulation are likened to Noah's Flood. The unbelieving world continues as if there was no God, and **believers (like Noah) must witness to them**, warning of the coming judgement and telling them of God's way of salvation. **But to be like Noah we also have to help build the Ark. This corresponds today to building the Church.**

The Ark is firstly a type of Christ - the place of protection and salvation, for those in the Ark are protected from judgement and enter into a new-life. But secondly the Church, the body of Christ, is also called Christ because we are in (union with) Him. Therefore the Ark serves also as a picture of the Church.

Like Noah, our work for the Lord involves building the Church, working to build a strong united community of love and acceptance, where people can come and be saved. By faith we know the Lord will judge the wicked but will save the righteous, removing them from judgement in the Rapture. Therefore we must warn people of sin and judgement and provide them a place of salvation.

All who believe and come into the Ark (Christ and His Church) will be raptured before judgement falls.

As God removed Noah to safety before the Flood, showing His pleasure with his faith, so God will remove believers in the Rapture before the Judgements of the Tribulation will fall. In fact the last

sign the world will have before the Tribulation (the Day of the Lord) is the disappearance (removal) of believers who are lifted up high above the floods of judgement. But before God does this **we must make the best use of the remaining time to witness of God's grace and judgement and to build God's Ark (the Church)** so people have a place they can come and be saved and come under God's shelter and provision, a place where they can dwell in His Presence with His people rather than living spiritually under the world-system. **So Noah teaches us that a man of real faith will (1) witness to a world that will often reject his message, and (2) build the Church of Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:16-19).** So, a Biblical Christian must be committed to his local Church.