

FAITH—GAINING THE APPROVAL OF GOD

Hebrews 11:1-2

For the Christian – faith is assurance, faith is substance, faith is conviction, faith is a firm confidence in God. Faith is knowing His promises are true.

In Scripture God makes promises and we choose to believe them. Such as, believe in Jesus, the Son of God, and you will inherit eternal life (Jn. 3:16); Or, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5); Or, pray with thanksgiving and God's peace will guard your hearts and minds (Phil. 4:5,6). We then make life choices based on these promises, which may not make sense to others around us. They may ask, "Are you crazy?" or "Why are you doing 'that'?" and our answer may simply be, "God has promised, I believe Him and I'm acting on it." Bold faith.

When God promised Abraham he would have a son, Abraham believed God... bold faith. When God told Noah it was going to rain and he should build an ark, Noah believed God...bold faith. When God told Gideon to reduce the size of the army and promised a great victory over the Midianites, Gideon believed God...bold faith.

Faith is that tangible intangible that causes us to know that we can trust God. We can walk by faith in God and not by sight (the circumstantial evidence that is apparent around us) because our faith is the substance that others cannot see. And this gains God's approval! Remember, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

The 3-D magic eye pictures help us to understand faith. To many, those pictures are just some fancy designs. But to those who can see the wonderful 3-D objects that appear there is no question whatsoever that those objects are embedded within those pictures. Faith is like that. It can see the fulfillment of God's promise, even when others can't, and confidently makes life choices based on the promise.

As John MacArthur put it: "Faith actualizes into reality an unseen truth and commits a life to it." Faith comes from hearing God. Today, this week, this month put yourself in a place where you can hear the still small voice of God (and you might even hear his voice like a bullhorn).

Then you can confidently live with Bold Faith because you know you 'see' what others cannot! "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

JBD

CREATION

Hebrews 11:3

"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."

One of the amazing things about this world we live in is that it always points to the creator. Whether it's in the smallest of places or in the largest objects we know, God's fingerprints are already there. Take for instance the basic building block of protein in our bodies called Laminin that can only be seen through an electron microscope.

When Laminin is seen under intense magnification it's in the form of a cross! Or how about the vast expanse of the universe as seen by the Hubble space telescope that reveals the mathematical precision of the celestial bodies as they move in the sky. According to the second law of thermodynamics, it is the nature of things to move from a concentrated or coordinated state to a random one. This tends to contradict the evolutionists claim that we are all evolving into a higher state instead of "devolving" into a greater state of randomness and confusion. Romans 1:20 "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse"

The eyes of faith can clearly perceive the truth of God's existence and personal handiwork all around us. From the beauty of a butterfly's wings to the incredible awe of the Grand Canyon we know that God is with us always.

"Eyes of faith can clearly perceive the truth of God's existence"

HJ

ABEL

Hebrews 11:4

"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."

I love how the Bible doesn't sugar coat the truth of our humanity. It reveals the good, the bad, and the ugly side of our human condition. Right after the fall of man from the garden we see this story of the first siblings born from Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. Cain decided to honor God "his way" and Abel chose to honor God the way God had chosen. Honoring God is not an emotional event, it is a humbling of yourself and giving your very best in accordance to the will of God. The Bible tells us that love for God is a function of our obedience to Him.

1 John 5:2 "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."

Abel's life testifies to us today that faith is humbling yourself before God and acting on His Word. This pleases God and brings the heart of the Christian into a right standing with God. Abel did what was right, not what was popular. And though it cost him his life, his testimony is just as powerful today as it ever was. Living life God's way is far more profitable than living it by the seat of your pants and hoping that your good intentions will carry you through. We all have the right to choose between the two trees in the garden in this life. Choose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and you get to decide what's right and wrong. But if you choose the tree of life, you live your life by God's way of truth. "Choose you this day whom you will serve...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way which seems right unto a man, but its end is the ways of death."
Humble yourself and give your very best!

HJ

PLEASING GOD

Hebrews 11:6

We don't normally see the words impossible and God in the same sentence. More likely, we recall verses like: "With God all things are possible." Scripture does reveal though that there are certain things that God cannot do. For example, He cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). He can't deny himself (2 Timothy 2:13). He cannot be mocked (Galatians 6:7). And apparently, he cannot be pleased with someone who won't trust him!

That shouldn't surprise us. You cannot take pleasure in any relationship devoid of trust. Every marriage requires mutual trust to function. A parent cannot be pleased with a child he or she can't trust. An employee finds no pleasure in an untrustworthy boss, or vice versa. And so with God: He implores us to trust him and then acts on our behalf when we do. He also hesitates to act when we refuse to trust. He is never pleased with unbelief.

Fortunately, Hebrews 11:6 tells us how to demonstrate our faith in God in a way that pleases him. First, we must believe that he exists. That is, that God is actually who he claims to be – the God of the Bible; the everlasting, all- mighty, merciful and just God of Israel. As such, he is fully trustworthy and true in all his ways. And he invites us into a faith-based relationship with him through his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, we please God by earnestly seeking him with the confidence that God will in fact reward our faith. To be earnest is to be sincere and diligent. To seek God is to actively pursue his help, his leading and his will for our specific needs or concerns. Hebrews 4:16 tells us to approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we might receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. That's what 'bold faith' is all about – trusting God in our daily lives in a way that pleases God and sees results (rewards) in our personal experience.

Is it possible your life is not pleasing God? It is if you are not actively trusting him. Why not stop everything and resubmit your life and circumstances to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Thank God that he is in fact, who he claims to be. And commit yourself, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to wholeheartedly pursue his plan and purposes for your life on a daily basis. If you do, you can be assured that God is pleased with your faith in him...and rewards are sure to follow.

"And without faith it is impossible to please God; He rewards those who earnestly seek him."
JEE

NOAH

Hebrews 11:7

Noah was a man just like you and me. He dynamically put his persistent faith into action. Noah had a deep reverential fear of God, so that when God told Noah of impending destruction due to man's violent and lawless actions, Noah took notice and obeyed. How do we interact with the warnings we find in God's Word? Do we, in faith, obey the Word of God, without question or delay? Do we, like Noah, stand in Christ, evidencing such a stark contrast to the wicked world around us that it is clear who has been made righteous and those who continue to live for themselves? Selflessness follows the path of obedience and service.

Noah was a family man. Faith and reverential fear of God catapulted Noah to provide for the protection of his family. How are we taking action steps to preserve our families from the wickedness in this world? Just wrath must fall on sin (sinful mankind), how are we shielding our families with truth and action? Noah was willing to suffer the rejection, ridicule, and the resentment of worldliness to obey God and protect his family. Are we willing to be perceived as foolish, so we can stand on the truth of what God commands?

Remember, the world will try and drag you down; because it does not like to be seen for what it is: Unrighteous and unjust. Noah, by obedience, fear, and faith in God (with action), became a centerpiece of God's redemptive plan for the ages. It may not be popular to obey God, but by faith we must obey. Remember, your obedience will make the world's disobedience be seen for what it is. By the way, if God asks you to do something, HE will give you the strength to carry it out.

"By faith, Noah...in holy fear built an ark..."

TWR

WHERE FAITH GROWS

Hebrews 11:8-10

Faith is part and parcel of the Christian life. Without faith, there is no Christian life. "For without faith, it is impossible to please God." You never outgrow the need for faith, because the Christian life is "By faith from first to last," as Paul put it. The "righteousness from God," that we so desperately need, "comes through faith." We walk by faith, stand firm by faith, and are shielded by faith from the fiery darts of the enemy. Your success as a disciple of Jesus is dependent upon your faith. So how's your faith?

We can learn from a man like Abraham. We learn, for one thing, that faith is not an independent quality we can switch on at need. A person can no more manufacture faith on the spot than he can manufacture the ability to play the violin on the spot. When you or I get into a tough place – the doctor's office calls and says that the test for cancer was positive; or our children are in trouble; or our job is downsized – at the moment we most need faith, we will not be able to manufacture it. Faith, by its very nature, is not initiatory; it is a response to something else, to God's character and his word. For faith to produce the fruit we need in times of trouble – peace when the doctor calls, patience when the children are in trouble, kindness and self-control – it must already have been growing in the atmosphere of God's word.

Abraham's faith was a response to God's word (Genesis 15:1, which is, by the way, the first biblical use of the phrase, "The word of the Lord"). God's word is the atmosphere in which faith lives, the soil from which it grows.

So if the doctor were to call today with bad news, would you have what it takes to trust God and continue doing the right thing with peace of mind? If you are interacting with God, responding to his word, and growing in faith – not by leaps and bounds but step by step – you would. And nothing glorifies God more than when his people trust him completely.

God's word is the soil in which faith grows.

SL

SARAH

Hebrews 11:11-12, NLT

"It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them."

Hebrews 11 is often referred to as "Faith's Hall of Fame." Our overarching goal is to spur us to bold faith by providing examples of people who lived lives of extraordinary faith. In verses eleven and twelve, Abraham's wife Sarah serves as a role model as someone who believed God.

The story referenced is recorded in Genesis chapters 17-21. The account of the birth and life of Isaac features heavily into New Testament theology and is usually told through the vantage point of Abraham. The Scriptures tell us repeatedly that, "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness." However, what is most interesting in Hebrews 11:11-12 is that we're told that Sarah, too, actively believed God for the impossible because of His promise. She was not a passive recipient of her husband's faith, but an active participant in faith herself. Husband and wife were partners in faith together, and the results perpetuated blessings through the generations till today.

I love when husbands and wives are partners in faith. Years ago there was a popular slogan that said, "A family that prays together, stays together." Do you remember that? We rarely hear that said anymore; nevertheless, it is very true. A partnership of faith binds couples and families together in profound ways because it connects them all to the One who makes and keeps promises. Cultivate active faith within your home. There will be multi-generational blessings as a result.

Can you imagine how this story might have turned out if Abraham did not have a partner in his wife to believe God's promises? Imagine if Sarah had attempted to go faith's journey alone. Singles who are looking for mates: among all the attractive attributes, a willingness to believe God should be most important. You will save yourself heartache and you will produce children that are apt to love and serve God. Find a partner in faith.

Each one of us has a level of faith. We also all have a limit of what we think is possible. During this Bold Faith Initiative I challenge you to ask God to expand your faith limit so that you, too, like Sarah, can believe God for the impossible and discover for yourself that He keeps his Word.

Believe God for the impossible!

JMB

THE MEASURING STICK OF BOLD FAITH

Hebrews 11:13-16 HCSB

This passage may bother a young Christian. How was it that individuals like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah did not receive from God all the promises given to them? As one grows in their faith; they may find promises given unfulfilled as a young Christian. Discouraged, they may begin to wonder, whether they had misheard God, or He had not been truthful.

Our belief in the inspiration of Scripture, tells us the second alternative is impossible, because the Bible says, "God cannot lie." All that is left, is to assume we had misunderstood. But what if the thoughts of these promises keep coming back. Promises like, God would use you to make disciples of Christ, who would make a significant impact in the world. Yet, now you have given twenty plus years in service to the Lord and you have yet to see the impact you had expected. In this passage, two things from verse 15 stick out that might help one resolve this inner conflict. They are found in verse 15: " If they were thinking about where they came from, they would have had an opportunity to return."

First, the above mentioned, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, were NOT an embarrassment to God because they were not thinking about where they came from. In other words, they had their sights set on something much better and with much more splendor than old planet earth.

Second, because they had stopped thinking about where they came from, they were able to see and understand how God's promises go well beyond our time on planet earth. They understood, God's promises are eternal in nature and cannot be fully fulfilled until we have reached our heavenly destination.

This should cause us to realize, like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, God wants us to simply love Him by obeying His commands. If we do this, then we can be assured like these saints of old, that all of God's promises will be fulfilled in their entirety; when He brings us to His heavenly city.

In the meantime, the most important desire we should seek, is not to experience the fulfillment of these promises now. Rather, it is to be measured with the same measuring stick by which they were measured. What was this measuring stick? To have God say of us, what He said of them. May the measuring stick of our Bold Faith be, "God is not ashamed to be called OUR God!"

May God not be ashamed to be called our God!

THV

SEEING THE UNSEEN

Hebrews 11:17-19

Faith honors God, and God honors faith! A story from the life of missionaries Robert and Mary Moffat illustrates this truth. For ten years this couple labored faithfully in Bechuanaland without one ray of encouragement to brighten their way. They could not report a single convert. Finally the directors of their mission board began to question the wisdom of continuing the work. The thought of leaving their post, however, brought great grief to this devoted couple, for they felt sure that God was in their labors, and that they would see people turn to Christ in due season. They stayed, and for a year or two longer, darkness reigned.

One day a friend in England sent word to the Moffatts that she wanted to mail them a gift and asked what they would like. Trusting that in time the Lord would bless their work, Mrs. Moffat replied, "Send us a communion set; I am sure it will soon be needed." God honored that dear woman's faith. The Holy Spirit touched the hearts of the villagers, and soon a little group of converts were united to form the first Christian church in that land. The communion set from England was delayed in the mail, but on the very day before the first commemoration of the Lord's Supper in Bechuanaland, the set arrived.

Some people think of faith as a passive resignation, a simple copout from personal involvement in the realities of life. What a contrast this is to the portrait of faith given in the Word of God. Faith is not blind; it is intelligent. Faith is not irrelevant; it works in the arena of life. Scarcely any verse in the New Testament is more important than this because it states the nature of all true faith. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, Hebrews 11:1.

Consider now what faith, the firm conviction that things they could not see and in some cases could not understand were nonetheless true, led these people to do. Noah in Holy fear prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, because he believed and trusted God. He heeded the warning of God and complied with God's instruction even though the judgment God warned about seemed remote and had no visible indications of possible fulfillment. Abraham obeyed; he left his homeland, friends, and relatives, to go live among strange people when God's promises consisted only of generalities, without so much as one specific hint as to when or how they might be fulfilled.

Faith is not commanded to understand every word from God. It is commanded to obey.

MR

ISAAC'S FAITH

Hebrews 11:20

Some acts of men just fit into the faith hall of fame. Isaac blessing his sons is not one of them. Noah, by faith, building an ark fits. Isaac, being duped into blessing someone he does not intend to bless, does not. Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac fits while Isaac's blessing given in deception does not.

In the story recorded in Genesis 27, there is deception on the part of Jacob and his mother, Rebekah. Jacob lies. He even invokes the name of God as to why he was so successful on the hunt. However, in the midst of this story there is also truth. The truth of whom God chose at their birth and the truth of the prophetic blessing of Isaac and how it played out in life.

So let's look a little deeper into the story and see three ways Isaac acted in faith causing him to fit into the Hebrews 11 faith hall of fame.

1. Isaac believed God and acted upon his faith. He believed the promise first given to Abraham and then to Isaac was true. He also believed it was his right to pass that promise on to his son since it had not yet been fulfilled. In regard to their future, Isaac was convinced the promise would happen because God said it.

2. Isaac knew God always supplied for whatever God wanted. He was the one strapped to an altar until God stepped in and supplied the ram. He saw God provide the wife chosen for him. Since Isaac's blessing was also prophetic, Isaac must have sought God for just the right words to bless his sons. When Isaac blessed Jacob, he spoke words given through the Spirit of God and believed them the correct words for this son, even if he thought he was blessing Esau.

3. Isaac was reminded that God is God and he needed to choose to obey His will. When the twins were born, God specifically told Rebekah that "the older will serve the younger" (Genesis 25). Rebekah must have told Isaac and for whatever reason, Isaac did not consider that fact until this moment he was deceived. Isaac, then, believed God had a hand in this and that the words he spoke were meant for Jacob. This fact is demonstrated in that Isaac never disciplined Jacob for deceiving him but blessed him a second time when he sent Jacob to Paddan Aram. He specifically blessed Jacob with the promise given to Abraham and his descendants knowing it was through Jacob this promise would be fulfilled.

Isaac believed God and blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

DC

WHAT WILL THEY SAY ABOUT ME WHEN I DIE...?

Hebrews 11:21

"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff."

A thought from C.H. SPURGEON inspired this devotional thought for Bold Faith 2016: **"For I desire each one of you to rehearse the scene of your own departure, for soon a tale will be told of everyone commencing with, "When he was dying."**

Have you ever asked the Lord; "What will they say about me at my funeral?" It's great when a Christian lives a good life, knowing, sharing, and trusting in Christ. But when it's our time to die...what will our family and friends be able to say about how we lived our life....was it Christ-honoring? Did it serve others? Or were we judgmental? People don't need to hear what we are against as much as what we are for.

Will our faith in Jesus draw others to Christ, or push them away? Will we leave this life the way we tried to live it? When Jacob was in the process of dying, he sought to leave this earth asking God to bless his sons. What will be our last thoughts and requests before passing on to glory? I'm more convinced now than ever before that we, as believers in Jesus Christ, ought to study His word and learn how to share God's love with everyone. But we must also learn how to honor Christ when it's our turn to die!

If Christians are going to honor the Lord in life, then I believe they must learn how to honor Him in death! Learn how to ask: what, who, or where will be my legacy? Scripture tell us we will have mansions in heaven...I believe that! However, what will be our building materials? Our building materials come from the love that we shared with others in this life! This is how we can affect the way we will be remembered...it's not as much about our accomplishments as it is about our relationships!

Let's pray for those that call Jesus, Savior: For His guidance throughout our journey... Following the Author and Finisher of our faith...all the way to our last breath. Let's pray that we WILL finish our race for Jesus stronger than when we started.

When we are unafraid to live, we will be UNAFRAID to die. Let us finish our race toward the cross in such a manner that others will be able to see JESUS.

What will they say about me when I die...?

DA

WHEN HIS END WAS NEAR

Hebrews 11:22

Why does God allow you go through trials in your life? Why must you keep facing temptations to sin over and over again? Because there is nothing more precious than your faith in God, and trials and temptations test your faith (James 1:2), purify it (1 Peter 1:6-7) and make it grow. In the midst of a trial or temptation, your faith (or lack of faith) is put on display. What you really believe, and who you really believe in, is never more clear (to yourself and to others) than when you are experiencing trials and temptations.

There have not been many people in history who have undergone such rigorous trials and temptations as Joseph. First, his mother died while he was still young. Then he was rejected by his siblings and was left to die in an empty cistern. After that, he was sold as a slave to Potiphar in Egypt. Next Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him and framed him for a crime he didn't commit. For this, he was thrown into prison for years, unsure whether he would ever get out. Through these trials and temptations, Joseph's faith grew and became strong. He witnessed God's love for him, even when he was in slavery and in prison. He understood that God had controlled and planned everything that had happened to him for his good and the good of the entire world (Genesis 50:20). His faith in God gave him the ability to obey God, when it would have been easier to give in. His faith helped him to persevere when it would have been natural to despair. His faith gave him hope for the future, knowing that God would not forsake him or leave him in his trial forever.

It wasn't until the age of one hundred and ten that Joseph underwent his last trial—death. If regular trials and temptations display the state of our faith, the trial of death does so even more. The author of Hebrews tells us that, "By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones" (Hebrews 11:22). Having witnessed God's care and faithfulness to him throughout his life, Joseph had no doubt that God would come through on his promises to Israel.

Are you facing a trial or temptation right now? Realize that it is an opportunity to express your faith in God. Then, when **your** end is near, you can still walk by faith.

Trials and temptations are an opportunity to trust God.

KL

MOSES'S PARENTS' FAITH

Hebrews 11:23

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

The Bible chronicles how Abraham's faith – discovered late in life – led to a heritage of faith among his family for generations. We can see something similar with Moses. The parents of this man of great faith were also people of faith. They left him a legacy of faith – the kind of trust fund every parent should leave to his or her children!

Some parents leave their kids money, and that's a good thing. Others leave their kids a legacy of service, and that's an even better thing. Some leave a legacy of knowledge, including Bible knowledge, which is rich indeed. But nothing compares to the legacy of faith.

There is an opposition between faith and fear. Moses' parents (v. 23) acted by faith (that's one side of the equation) and did not fear the king's edict (that's the other side.) Moses himself (v. 27) "left Egypt" by faith (that's one side of the equation) "not fearing the king's anger" (that's the other side).

Faith and fear are like the poles of a magnetic field: they repel each other, but they attract everything else in their sphere. Fear pulls the things going on in our life into its field so that we have more and more things to worry about. Faith pulls the things going on in our life into its field, so that we have more opportunities to trust God. But faith is stronger than fear.

When Moses' parents Amram and Jochebed knew they were going to have a baby, the king's edict requiring the immediate termination of newborn Jewish boys came into view. Would that edict be drawn into the field of fear or of faith? If fear, then they would obey the king. If faith, they would protect the child. They protected the child. When new challenges enter your life, are they more likely to be drawn into the field of faith or of fear?

Pass on a "trust fund" – a legacy of faith – to those you love.

SL

FAITH WITHOUT FEAR?

Hebrews 11:27-28

At times we move forward in faith not knowing fully where we are going or if we will really get there. That might seem like a contradiction to faith: "...the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen" (v.1). However, experience teaches us that as we move forward in faith we are often holding our breath in worry. When it's over we give a sigh of relief and say to our self or even to God, "I hope I never have to do that again."

This is the mustard-seed faith of the kingdom of God within us, which has great potential to grow to become the largest tree in the garden. God plants it within us, knowing it will grow as He grows us spiritually. That's right. God has committed Himself to growing us in faith. Just as Moses grew from a mustard-seed size faith when he began his desert experience to a faith without fear as he led the people of Israel, so are we to grow in faith. Moses saw the invisible God; and in peace, free from fear he did as God said. He honored God by submitting to His instruction, by keeping the Passover (v. 27).

What does that mean for you? You can submit to God's hand of grace, hold to His teachings, and allow Him to grow your mustard-seed faith. He will lead you out of bondage into a Promise Land. As your faith grows, fear and doubt will subside. You too, will be able to see the invisible God in your life. Israel was God's first-born child. As God's child, can you expect your Heavenly Father to do anything less in your life? Allow God to grow your faith, and to deliver you from the bondage of fear.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3

D.S.M.

WHAT IS GOD DOING?

Hebrews 11:30

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days. If we're going to be honest, there are times that we ask God "what are you doing?" When the Holy Spirit speaks to us, we sometimes wonder if He is talking to the right person. God is not in the business of aligning things that will make our lives perfect. He is in the business of moving His kingdom forward, and we are only the vessels that do that.

Within the above passage and much of chapter 11, we see one phrase repeated. That phrase is "by faith." Faith is the act of believing and acting on something that we cannot see with our own eyes. You cannot touch faith, but you possess it. You cannot give faith, but people can find it. This is what drives us as Christians. We believe in a God that has made us promises and it is through faith that we hold tightly to those promises.

Where does this passage fit in? The Israelites were told to march around the city of Jericho for seven days and the Lord would bring defeat to the great city. Did the people have an army? Did they enter into battle? The answer is no; they just did as the Lord had instructed them. How much easier would our lives be if we just let God do the work and we only did as He instructs? We can sometimes add little things to or take things away from what we are instructed.

My question is this: Is there anything in your life right now that displays faith? Are you acting "by faith" in regard to something the Lord has instructed or laid upon your heart? The only thing we have to do is act when the Lord tells us to act and be still when He tells us to be still. God's word is the soil in which faith grows.

Reflect today on what it means to act "by faith."

DG

RAHAB

Hebrews 11:31

"It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God..."

Wow! Talk about Bold Faith! Not what one would expect from a prostitute in a pagan nation. But this was one incredible woman. She had heard of the works of God on behalf of the Israelite people. She recounted the events in Joshua 2 and even said in Joshua 2:11, "...for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below." She took a step of faith and asked for the safety of her family because she had shown kindness to the spies she had hidden from the men sent by Jericho's king. And the spies' faith was bolstered as well. When they made their report to Joshua they said, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us." (Joshua 2:24)

Because she took this step of obedient faith, based on the stories she had heard, God blessed her in mighty ways! God loves it and rewards people who take steps of faith. Jesus was very excited and generous with people when he saw them choose faith. He was sad when those who should have had faith (or more faith) failed to trust the Lord.

God blessed Rahab by saving her and her family when Jericho was conquered. She married an Israelite man, Salmon. Salmon and Rahab had a child named Boaz who became the great grandfather of David, king of Israel. Rahab is even mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in the book of Matthew. What a great heritage Rahab has because of faith – BOLD FAITH.

Now is the time for us to make bold choices of faith! It is a risk at times. We might have to risk our lives, our jobs, a loving relationship, or a friendship because we choose to please our Almighty God and Father rather than compromise our convictions for the sake of earthly relationships.

Rahab is a great example of faith. May we learn from her about what it means to walk by faith and not by sight.

Choices of faith lead to great blessing!

JDB

FAITH THROUGH ANY SEASON

Hebrews 11:32

“And what more shall I say?”

This is how the author of Hebrews begins verse 32 of chapter 11. A rhetorical question no doubt, because there is much more that could be said of the faith that drove those who have, in times past, believed God for great miracles, signs and wonders.

Specific reference is made of various individuals who, through great faith in God, did incredible things...supernatural things that have inspired the hopes of God's people throughout history. These references here are made to highlight the fact that great feats of faith in God could never be told exhaustively. In part because God has done too many supernatural things through His people in the past to ever be told in their entirety. However, this does not exclude the additional fact that God is still doing great things through His people today, too many things to ever be told in entirety.

There is another verse that begins with an interesting phrase, verse 36 says, “Still others...” It goes on to indicate that while some people's faith brought about great victories and supernatural “happenings,” other individuals had faith to see them through serious suffering. You see there are many today who would like to equate great faith with health, wealth and prosperity, and when these are lacking in someone's life they see it as a result of little faith or even no faith at all.

However, don't miss what Hebrews 11 is saying: at times God accomplishes awesome miracles through His people by faith, while at other time He sustains His suffering people by faith. Attempting to distinguish one instance as requiring greater faith than the other would be completely futile and (might I suggest) even sinful! Sinful because it implies that a person's faith in God is only genuine when things are good, and void when things become difficult. One could rightfully question whether such faith is really true faith at all!

So, whether tens of thousands are being defeated or suffering is being endured, both come through faith in God. It's all supernatural faith in a great God who walks with us every step of the way whether on the summit or in the valley! We should be so incredibly glad that our outward circumstances are not a direct indicator of the Bold Faith that we have in our God!

Faith that leads to victory, and faith that endures through suffering—it's all one and the same...**BOLD FAITH!**

PGP

KING DAVID'S RESUME

Hebrews 11:32

King David's earlier experiences and training look highly impressive in the form of a résumé;

- Selected by God as a young boy to be a king Slingshot sharpshooter
- Skilled instrumentalist and songwriter
- Devoted follower of God
- Hero; brave and effective commander Successful peacemaker
- Beloved and respected King

The entries in the middle of David's résumé are less than stellar;

- Loss of focus + devastating lapses in judgment = moral collapse
- Adulterer
- Coward
- Murderer

Consequences; guilt, death of a son, division in his family, dissention in his country. But the final entries to David's résumé were entered postmortem, and take his entire life into account;

- Forefather of Jesus, the Son of God
- His songs have endured and inspired throughout generations
- Quoted by Jesus Himself
- Mentioned in scripture over 900 times
- God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.' (Acts 13:22)

There are some great Bold Faith lessons to glean from King David's life/ résumé;

- Don't lose focus in the middle—work hard to finish life with bold, strong, vibrant faith.
- Sin will tear your life apart, and God doesn't always shelter us from its consequences. With repentance, God can help you pick up the pieces and bring healing and restoration.
- If you can remain faithful to God through your years, others can follow you and stand on your shoulders, build on the foundation you've laid, and learn from your life of faithfulness.

Today, keep your focus on Christ and remember, you have people coming after you who need your strong shoulders to stand on and strong faith to build on.

David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart (Acts 13:22)

BT

BETWEEN EDEN AND ARMAGEDDON

Hebrews 11:32

Are you old enough to know what a "bag phone" looks like? If not, get your smart phone out later and ask Google or Siri, and imagine strapping one on your shoulder every day. Bag phones were as heavy as a bowling ball and so ENORMOUS, they had to be carried in a bag slung over the shoulder. Fortunately, they were just a transitional piece of technology that helped transition between landline and cell phones.

There is a transitional person in Hebrews 11:32 who obtains an honorable mention in this list of Old Testament "all-stars" of faith in Yahweh. His name is Samuel. Samuel was the last of the "judges," who were early leaders of God's people. Samuel was willing to step aside and transition to a new role as the first "prophet" in Israel. Samuel anointed a tall and handsome man named Saul as "King" over Israel, and later God directed Samuel to anoint a successor, David, who was a small, red-headed sheep herder at the time.

You are a transitional figure in many ways, living in a transitional time between Eden and Armageddon, and between the last generation and the next. You are a transitional figure, and Jesus Christ has given you the "ear tingling" news that He will be returning soon. Are you living closely enough to Him that you can discern between His Will and the most obvious choice? Are you determined to do whatever He says? If so, today you may find even better ways of expressing love to God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbors as self.

And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle.

(1 Samuel 3:11)

BT

THE OTHERS

Hebrews 11:35-40

Hebrews 11 is well known to serious students of the Bible and stands as a tribute to faithful servants of God from long ago. The list of names forms a "Who's Who" of Old Testament heroes; Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses, to drop a few names.

In verses 35-40, the word "others" appears twice to inform us the list given is not complete, and that enduring in faith is not only heroic, but also involves sacrifice and suffering. The author mentions experiences endured by these others such as torture, humiliation, beatings, chains, imprisonment, stoning, being sawn in two, abuse, homelessness and, death.

The ancient apologist, Tertullian reminds us; "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Who were these unnamed "others"? Whose faces flashed through the mind of the writer? Perhaps heaven will reveal these unknowns.

Perhaps reflection on the passage causes us to respond in two ways:

1. With gratitude for the strength and faith exhibited, which drew them to the high and ultimate price of their calling and, as a result, to commit ourselves to honoring and obeying God despite the cost. And
2. To deeply examine my own commitment to following Christ in light of the challenges I face in my time and culture.

In my office I have an 8 1/2 x 11 sign from a Willow Creek Leadership Conference. It reads: "You can choose COURAGE, Or you can choose COMFORT, But you cannot choose both."

DP

SOMETHING BETTER

Hebrews 11:40

I was walking by a New Age bookstore one day and was intrigued by a sign in the front window that said, "Bibles for sale." I thought to myself, "Are you kidding??? When did New Agers start marketing the Old and New Testament?"

So, I went into this fairly large bookstore (imagine 1/2 the size of a Barnes and Noble). I walked past the incense isle and the healing crystal isle. On a prominent shelf toward the back of the store, there were twelve or so books in the "bibles" section.

I opened each "bible" to John 1:1 to test the accuracy of the translation. John 1:1 is literally translated, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." I wasn't surprised to find everything BUT the literal translation in these misleading and unfortunate non-bibles;

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

"In the beginning, God spoke a word..." "In the beginning was God..." "

These misquotes reject the foundational truth of Christianity proclaimed in scripture; that God has had a plan in place to send Jesus Christ to redeem the world since BEFORE time began.

John 1:1 is an affirmation of God's plan to choose to love mankind fiercely and attests to His desire to restore nearness with us. God's Plan A (Jesus) is a perfect plan for us, for all who lived before us, and for all who will come after us. There is no Plan B. Maybe you have a neighbor or friend who needs to hear this truth spoken to them in love today.

"...God had planned something better for us
so that only together with us would they be made perfect."

BT