

Hebrews 11:1–3

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BIG SANDY, Texas—At our Bible study on Wednesday night, I began a series about Hebrews 11. The first installment was a presentation titled “Hebrews 11:1-3.” I want to share some of my comments in this article.

Mentioning faith and hope

Hebrews 11:1—“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Compare translations

One good study habit is to compare a verse in other Bible translations.

The New Testament in Modern Speech (Richard Francis Weymouth)—“Now faith is a confident assurance of that for which we hope, a conviction of the reality of things we do not see.”

The Amplified New Testament—“Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality—faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses.”

Take a peek at the Greek

Another good study habit is to take a peek at the original languages of the Bible.

The word *faith* in Hebrews 11:1 comes from the Greek word *pistis* (*Strong’s* No. 4102), which is a noun that means “faith, faithfulness, belief and trust.”

The term *hoped for* in Hebrews 11:1 comes from the Greek word *elpizo* (*Strong’s* No. 1679), which is a verb that means “to hope, to hope for and to expect.” The noun version is *elpis* (*Strong’s* No. 1680), which means “hope and expectation.”

More verses about faith and hope

Acts 24:14-15—“But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing [faith] all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”

Philippians 1:19-20—"For I know [having faith] that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

1 Corinthians 13:13—"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

My view of faith

The following three statements reflect my personal view concerning faith.

- I believe that God (as a perfect Father) will supply our personal needs—because He is trustworthy and because He loves us.
- I believe that God will often give us the desires of our heart—because He loves us.
- I believe that God sometimes says "no" to our requests—because He loves us.

Description of faith

The apostle Paul gave the congregation at Rome a good description of faith.

Romans 4:19-21—"And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."

Mercy toward Abraham and Sarah

While those words are a wonderful description about faith, allow me to show you how merciful Paul was toward Abraham and Sarah.

- Paul wrote that Abraham did not waver (Romans 4:20).
- Paul wrote that Abraham was fully convinced (Romans 4:21).

Let's notice if Abraham and Sarah always avoided wavering and if they were always fully convinced.

- Genesis 17:17—Abraham laughed at the Lord's suggestion that he and Sarah would have another child.
- Genesis 17:18—Abraham floated the idea to God that the promised seed could exist through Ishmael.
- Genesis 18:12—When Sarah heard about God's plan for her and Abraham to have another child, she laughed (within herself).
- Genesis 18:13—The Lord asked Abraham why Sarah laughed.

■ Genesis 18:15—When Sarah denied laughing, the Lord reminded her that she did indeed laugh.

Dear friends—even when Abraham and Sarah showed the reality of their humanity, Paul wrote in the Bible about them being an example of faith.

Please remember the following two ideas.

First, God will often have more patience toward you than other people will have toward you.

Second, God will often have more patience toward you than you will have toward yourself.

Good testimony for 10 people

Hebrews 11:2—“For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.”

The chapter called Hebrews 11 mentions 10 people having a good testimony written about them.

- Abel
- Enoch
- Noah
- Abraham
- Sarah
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Joseph
- Moses
- Rahab

Rahab’s actions were praised

Did you notice that Hebrews 11:31 mentions Rahab as one of the 10 people who received a good testimony?

Whenever I publicly compliment Rahab’s behavior (described in Joshua 2:1-7), I am amazed at the religious people who don’t understand and appreciate what she did. The testimony in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 is amazing.

Wanted to talk about six others

Hebrews 11:32 mentioned six other people—but it did not take the time to describe their good works.

- Gideon
- Barak
- Samson
- Jephthah
- David
- Samuel

Framed by the word of God

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.”

Notice examples of how the Creator God was involved in the details of His creation.

Job 38:4—“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.”

Job 38:6—“To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone?”

Isaiah 40:22—“It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.”

Isaiah 44:7—“And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, let them show these to them.”

Isaiah 44:24—“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: ‘I am the LORD, who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself.’”

Isaiah 45:7—“I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.”