

If You Believe in God's Promises, You'll Pass the Test

Hebrews 11:1-19

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I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of the new and better covenant stating that “For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would be sought for another” (Hebrews 8:7). The promises of the first covenant were not as great as the promises of the new one (Hebrews 8:6) and the Law, tabernacle and sacrifices were a mere shadow or copy of the heavenly (Hebrews 10:1), but those were not what doomed the first covenant. Rather, the “fault” of the first covenant was that the people “did not continue in my covenant, and I did not care for them” (Hebrews 8:9). The people did not continue in the covenant because they lack faith. Hebrews 4:2, states that “For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed.” Faith is the key to keeping the covenant; faith is what keeps us from shrinking back to destruction and is what preserves the soul. Faith is what we must possess if we desire to come to God (draw near).

God has established the new covenant; Jesus has made the Only offering we need, and He sits at the right hand of God, the Father. Yet still, we must come to Him in faith. Hebrews was written not only to correct and encourage the Jews believers who were wrestling with their faith but also to strengthen their souls. They were facing persecution for their faith. The writer addresses the many false beliefs and hardships that they were facing. He clarifies that only Christ was to be the center of a life of faith not sacred traditions or new ideas.

II. The Lesson: If You Believe in God's Promises, You'll Pass the Test

1. vv. 1 – 3.

Faith is the foundation to our relationship with God. Verse 1 not only define faith but let us know why we can be convinced of what God has promised. One of our physical senses is sight. This gives evidence of the material world. Faith is our evidence of the invisible spiritual world. What we can see, and touch is not faith. Faith goes beyond our reasoning. Faith undergirds what we hope for. Substance means that which stands under. Faith and trust in God and His Word will give us a sure foundation in this life.

The writer spent time reminding the Jewish believers of how great what they believe in is. That is the things pertaining to Christ are far better than anything ever before offered to mankind. It was not that they didn't have something to believe in, for the epistle states that had formerly done much better but through their lack of conviction and doubtful believing, they were slip-sliding away. The writer was reminding and reassuring them that faith is being sure of what we hope for, certain of what we do not see. Believers are convinced that the things they do not see regarding God are real and that He will act in fullness of hope.

We did not were around when God created the world and all that is in it but by faith believe that God spoke, and things came into existence (Genesis 1:1-31; 2:1). By faith we understand that the world was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. This corrects all erroneous beliefs and teachings that the world was created out of things that were visible.

The Jewish believers who were discouraged and thought of giving up on Jesus needed a good testimony and examples of faith for encouragement. We are provided a list of godly examples of different personalities and circumstances, but they all have one thing in common – faith. We shouldn't hold back on our testimonies because someone who make thinking of turning back or turning away from the faith, may just need to hear how you are keeping the faith through your trials and tribulations.

2. v. 4.

The difference between the sacrifice of Cain and the sacrifice of Abel (Genesis 4:3-5) was not between animal and vegetable. It was that Abel's sacrifice was made by faith. Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to God. It was consumed with fire from heaven. Our faith may not necessarily be rewarded on earth but God testifies to the righteousness of the faithful. Abel's blood still speaks to us of the value of eternity.

Proverbs 15:6-8 states that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord ...but He loves him who follows righteousness. When we offer worship sacrifices to the Lord, he is looking at our hearts. Whether we are offering praise, giving thanks, sharing our resources, or serving, we are to do it all by faith in the Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

3. vv. 5 & 6.

Enoch was a man of faith that had such a close communion with God that he did not see death. He was commended as one who pleased God. It was by faith that he was taken up to heaven without dying. It is impossible to please God without faith in God. Even to come to God, to be relationship with God, we must believe that exist and will reward you for diligently, earnestly, and genuinely seeking Him.

4. v. 7.

In verses 4 and 5, Abel and Enoch were cited as men of faith. Here Noah is held up as an outstanding example of acting by faith. Noah was warned of things that he had seen. God warned Noah that He was preparing a flood to destroy the world because of its unbridled wickedness (Genesis 6:13). Real faith will do something.

It didn't matter how ridiculous it may have seen; Noah acted in obedience to God and built a huge boat. The strength of his faith was that this project lasted 120 days during which time Noah preached to the onlookers. Secondly, his faith was strong enough that he was able to convert his household – his wife, three sons, and their wives.

5. vv. 8-12.

God first called Abraham when he lived in Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham was a very wealthy man with large flocks and a number of servants. God called him from the comfort of material security to experience the security of living by faith. He exchanged the comfort of what he could see for the challenge of things not seen.

6. **vv. 13-16.**

These all refers to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, mentioned earlier in this chapter which also include Abel, Enoch, and Noah. They had not received the specific promises that had come to Abraham and his family. These all died before they had received the promises, but they died firmly believing that they would one day receive them. They had seen them afar off, not with physical eyes, but with eyes of faith. They were contented to accept their status as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. The old spiritual reminds us that "This world is not our home; we are just passing through. The faithfulness of the patriarchs pleased God; and He was not ashamed to be called their God.

7. **vv. 17-19.**

When Abraham was confronted with a promise and a command from God which seemed to contradict each other; he did what we should do. He obeyed the command and let God take care of the promise.

III. Conclusion

Today, on every hand, we see people are restless and unhappy. People are acquired more and yet still left with emptiness. If only they realize this old world is not their home. Believers must keep their faith in the only true living God, walk by faith and not by sight in knowing that they will be justly rewarded for our faithfulness.

We looked forward and upward to hear God say that we have passed test, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."