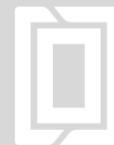


## WITHOUT THIS, MISSIONS IS IMPOSSIBLE

Hebrews 11:1-7



February 17, 2019 | ED UNDERWOOD

### **“Now without faith it is impossible to please him...” (Hebrews 11:6)**

We’ve come to a great transition in the Book of Hebrews as the writer moves from teaching to application. He has masterfully presented Jesus Christ’s superior ministry (6:13-10:18). Having proved that Jesus is better than any and every alternative and cautioned them against forsaking him and his followers, the writer begins this section with a stern warning: *Do not sin willingly and persistently because God severely judges his New Covenant people!* He then moves on to motivate them to *draw near to God in enduring faith* by connecting the believer’s faith to the believer’s endurance.

The key Greek term *hypomone*, endurance (10:36; 12:1, 3), which occurs nowhere else in Hebrews, brackets the section. The Greek word *pistis*, faith, occurs 24 times in chapter 11, begins and ends the chapter. The refrain “by faith” emphatically teaches Christians that faith in God is essential if we want to endure in our service to Christ. After celebrating the character of faith in chapter 11, the writer invites the reader to the endurance that secures the reward our redeemed heart desires (12:1-13, see also 10:34-39).

First Century Jews viewed history as the story of the God of Israel working through the heroes of the Old Testament to move His plan forward. Now the writer tells them why these heroes were great. It wasn’t their ancestry or their performance. Behind every act that God commends is a heart of faith. It’s a list that would surprise and maybe even embarrass these Jewish Christians. But it’s a list of those who lived great lives from God’s perspective because they believed what He said, even when they couldn’t see it.

### **Missional Christians and churches must have faith that endures – Faith to pray, faith to go, faith to send, faith to fail, and faith to try again.**

I. Faith that endures believes God no matter what, just like the heroes of the pre-flood era (Hebrews 11:1-7).

A. Three characteristics of faith (1-3):

1. Faith is the confidence that views things yet future and unseen as if they will turn out just the way God has said they will (1).
2. Faith pleases God. It’s clear from the Old Testament that God commends men and women who walk by faith (2, see the rest of the chapter).
3. Faith looks forward because it understands that the God of the Hebrews put everything that is in motion by His word. This means that all that we have seen, are seeing, and will see is due to His unseen power. Faith knows that God creates all that is visible from His word, which is invisible. Faith is a way of viewing life (3). “Faith is thus an effective power directed toward the future. It springs from a direct, personal encounter with the living God. The forward-looking capacity of faith enables an individual to venture courageously and serenely into an unseen future, supported only by the word of God.” (Lane, *Hebrews 9-13 in Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47B, p, 329).

B. The writer illustrates this faith he just described with stories of some heroes of the Old Testament from the era before the flood (4-7).

1. No matter what the reader may have thought about what made Abel's sacrifice superior to Cain's, the primary reason is because Abel's worship was due to his faith in God. Notice that Abel died young because of his faith, but his legacy of faith lives through the centuries (4).
  2. What a contrast! Enoch walked by faith for a lifetime and never died. He was called into God's presence apart from physical death, but that was not what made him great. What made him great in God's eyes was his faith (5).
  3. EMPHATIC REVIEW OF VV 1-3: It's not that faith is "a" way to please God; it's the only way. And, once again, faith is a way of viewing life. People of faith approach God as people who believe that He exists and rewards them for seeking Him in this way (by faith, v 6).
  4. Noah was a giant of faith because he lived for things to come, not for the present. He believed the promises of God, even when it meant that everyone thought he was nuts. It's extremely important that Noah, with all of his problems, was "an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." It surely wasn't due to his performance in his later years. Noah got sloppy drunk one night and the repercussions of his drunkenness have marked history through the animosity between the descendents of his sons (7).
- II. If you want your life to count in ways that please God, then you must live by faith. You must draw near to God with enduring faith.
- A. Enduring faith believes what God said more than what people say.
  - B. Enduring faith believes what God has said more than circumstances.
  - C. Enduring faith is looking forward to all that God has promised rather than back at all that we feel God may not have done.
  - D. Enduring faith draws near to our Good God even when life feels "not" good.
  - E. If you want the impact of your life to outlast your years on earth, live by faith.
  - F. Be remembered for your faith, not your performance, your money, your mind, your skills, your beauty, your career, your advice, your . . .
- III. If you want to live the missional life in a missional church, then you must live by faith. You must draw near to God with enduring faith.
- A. Enduring faith prays for missionaries and people groups, even when it seems useless.
  - B. Enduring faith goes to another people group, even when it's hard.
  - C. Enduring faith sends missionaries, even when it costs or doesn't make complete sense.
  - D. Enduring faith draws near to our Good God even our mission endeavors fail.
  - E. Enduring faith doesn't quit sending missionaries; it tries again in spite of the messiness of missions, problems with missionaries, or a discouraging failure.