

Session 3

February 5, 2023

DOES IT CALL YOU TO TRUST GOD?

Hebrews 11:1-6, 13-16

We remember from last week's lesson that "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). One of the ways that we know that God is talking to us is that our faith increases as our knowledge of God's word increases. These two themes, the *word* of God and *faith* in God are nestled nicely together in Hebrews chapter 11. Three ways that our faith is expressed are highlighted.

Faith is expressed in belief (vv. 1-3). The terms "faith" and "belief" are not identical, but they are inseparable. *Faith* is belief, but it has an element of trust built in. We can *believe* in something without necessarily *trusting* in it. Therefore, *belief* comes first; it provides the foundation for faith. That's where the writer begins in Hebrews chapter 11. Faith has an element of both hope and expectation (v. 1), but it is not a "leap." Rather, it is based on solid evidence! For no better foundation for faith exists than the belief that there is *one true God* and *He made everything*. Why should we believe in God? Just look around! Somebody made it all, and the Bible tells us who (v. 2). And once we *believe* in Him, we can start to *trust* Him. For reflection: *When we served on the mission field, we found it best for those who had no Christian background, to start with the story of creation. But if someone already had Christian concepts, we went straight to the cross. Do you think that makes good sense? Why?*

Faith is expressed in worship (vv. 4-6). The story of Cain and Abel is not about a sacrifice made unacceptable by a *bad attitude*. Rather it is about a sacrifice made unacceptable by a *lack of obedience*. Both sons of Adam knew the right thing to do (see Gen. 3:7 as it relates to Heb. 9:22). Abel's offering rightly required the shedding of blood while Cain's did not. In fact, Cain's anger did not occur until after his sacrifice had been rejected! Abel took God at His word (that's faith!) and brought Him what He required. But Cain thought he knew better, acted on his presumption, and was rejected. Although he was slain by his brother, Abel's obedience is still an example for us today (v. 4).

The example of Enoch (Gen. 5:21-24) is fascinating. The account of his translation to heaven is brief and to the point: (1) he became a father to Methuselah at age 65; (2) he walked with God for the next 300 years; (3) and he "walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." The Hebrews account offers a bit more commentary. Verse 5 tells us that Enoch had *gained approval* by God. While the idea of approval often connotes a connection to good works, verse 6 points out that Enoch's approval was the result of exercising his faith. So, while Abel worshipped God through his sacrifice, Enoch worshipped God through his walk. For reflection: *Compare Genesis 4:10 and Hebrews 11:4. What can you note from these texts?*

Faith is expressed in perseverance (vv. 13-16). There is a bundle of "faith" truths wrapped up in these verses. First, all of those faithful saints died having never seen the results of their faith journey (v. 13). That is especially true of the prophets (see vv. 32-40). But second, that did not diminish their faith. They took God at His word, accepted their part in redemptive history, and admitted their earthly stay—like ours—is only temporary (v. 13). Third, these saints of God did not dwell on their past but on their future (v. 14). As attractive as their earthly lives may have

been, they all gave up some part of it to move God's redemptive plan forward (v. 15). Fourth, they will receive a reward for their faithfulness. What they gave up on earth is nothing compared to what God has prepared for them (see 1 Cor. 2:9). They looked forward to a heavenly place...and God has it ready for them, and for us! For reflection: *Compare the walk of faith in these verses to what happened in Numbers 14:1-4. What applications can we make?*