

Faith and Righteousness

Gardner looked over his son's suitcases. "You've got everything?"

"Yes, sir," Jaden replied.

Gardner would be driving his son to the airport in a couple of days to return to college. His ex-wife, Sharise, thought he and Jaden were "crazy."

"We don't have the money," Sharise had exclaimed. "The school said if the money is not on Jaden's books by January 30, he would be dropped from all of his classes. Where are we going to get \$3,000?"

"I'm up for the promotion at my job," Gardner told his son and ex-wife.

"They told you that months ago," lamented Sharise. "Why would we send him to school, just to turn around and have him come back?"

"We only need \$2,500," Jaden told his dad. "I've saved \$500 this last semester. We have a few days before I leave. We can spend these days in prayer."

For the next few days, Jaden and his dad sat together in the evenings and prayed for the Lord to make a way.

The day before Jaden was supposed to leave, someone knocked on their door. Gardner opened the door, and their pastor walked in.

"Gardner, someone left this with your name on it in the offering box yesterday," he said. He handed Gardner an envelope.

Gardner opened the envelope and found inside a check for \$2,500. "Praise the Lord!" Gardner said, handing the check to his son.

1. *If a ten-year-old child asked you, "What is faith?" how would you explain it?*

2. *When have you had great faith to do something?*

3. *When has faith been lacking in your own life?*

By Faith, the Righteous Keep God's Commands

Hebrews 11:1-4a, 7a, 8, KJV

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4a By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.

7a By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Hebrews 11:1-4a, 7a, 8, NIV

¹Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for.

³By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

^{4a}By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings.

^{7a}By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.

⁸By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Hebrews 11 presents many examples of faith, which is why it is often referred to as the "Hall of Faith." Our passage begins by giving us understanding of faith in two parts. First, faith gives us confidence that the future things we hope for in Christ will come to fruition. The Greek here for confidence or substance, *hypostasis*, speaks of something real or concrete in nature. What we hope for refers to something

that has not yet happened, so we must take it by true, substantial faith that what the Lord promises, He will deliver.

Second, faith gives us the assurance of things that we cannot see. The evidence of things we can “see” only by faith are every bit as real as what we see with our eyes.

Also, by faith we understand that everything we see in this physical universe was created by God’s command. We understand that what we see with our eyes was created by our invisible God, whom we “see” by faith alone.

By faith, Abel offered to the Lord a better sacrifice than did Cain. Abel offered the best of his flock to the Lord, whereas the same is not said of Cain’s offering (Gen. 4:2-4).

By faith, Noah obeyed God and built the ark, even though there hadn’t been the kind of rain and flooding that God described. But Noah believed God and built the ark.

By faith, Abraham obeyed God and set out for Canaan, even though he had no idea where he was heading at first. When God commanded, Abraham faithfully obeyed.

4. *How is faith described in this passage?*

5. *What do we understand by faith about the physical creation?*

6. *How did Abel, Noah, and Abraham demonstrate faith in God?*

By Faith, the Righteous Trust God’s Promises

Hebrews 11:17-18, 20-23, KJV

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things

Hebrews 11:17-18, 20-23, NIV

¹⁷By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”

to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

²⁰By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

²¹By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

²²By 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.

²³By 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.

God tested Abraham's faith by telling him to offer his beloved son, Isaac, as an offering, even though Abraham knew that God had promised his lineage would continue through Isaac. He had faith that would still happen.

Likewise, by faith Isaac, and later his son Jacob, blessed their respective sons with assurance that God would make a great nation of them. When Jacob's son Joseph was about to die, by faith he knew that one day God would bring His people back to the promised land. So he gave instructions that his remains would be taken back to be buried there. Some four centuries later, Moses' parents knew in their hearts that their son was special to God, so they risked their lives to keep him for three months, despite the king's edict of death for all the newborn males.

7. *In what did these Old Testament saints put their faith?*

8. *How did they demonstrate their faith?*

9. *How did God reward their faith?*

By Faith, the Righteous Look to a Better Future

Hebrews 11:32, 39-40, KJV

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Hebrews 11:32, 39-40, NIV

³²And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets.

³⁹These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

God also commended for their faith Gideon, who by faith defeated the Midianite host with only 300 soldiers, and Barak, who acted on God's promise of his army's victory that came via the prophetess Deborah.

Samson cried out in faith to the Lord and slew more Philistines in death than he had while alive. By faith, Jephthah received God's strength to defeat the Ammonites. And there was no time (vs. 32) to fully tell the faith stories of David and Samuel and the many prophets. Yet, despite the faithfulness of those named in this chapter, none of them received the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Like all these faithful saints, we, too, await the final fulfillment of all God's promises when Jesus returns to set all things right.

10. *Why did the writer of Hebrews only name these faithful servants of God?*

11. *Who were the men identified here?*

12. *Even though they were faithful, what did they not receive?*

She Kept the Faith

When Margaret Hayes heard about the need for medical missionaries in the African nation of the Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), the British woman felt it couldn't mean her. She had a speech difficulty, after all; but then she read Mark 4:40 in her daily Bible reading: "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

So Margaret went to Bible college, learned French, and studied tropical medicine. She soon was in a mud hut with a leaky, banana leaves roof in the Congo, treating everything from minor injuries to leprosy—and sharing Christ.

In 1960 the Belgian Congo became independent, and civil war soon broke out. Margaret was working with American missionary Mary Baker in another mud hut packed with patients who every morning heard a Bible reading, prayer, and short Gospel message. She saw God do amazing healings of people's bodies and souls; but she and Mary were arrested and marched to the town of Banalia, where rebels hostile to the new government kept her captive. Her daily Bible reading was 1 Peter 4:12: "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."

Margaret was to be shot, along with other foreign missionaries, but the rebels needed her medical help. Tragically, Mary Baker, five other missionaries, five children, and four nuns were massacred in Banalia after Margaret was taken away. The press announced that Margaret was "missing, believed killed"; but after more months of horrific experiences she was rescued. She says today her story can be summed up in these words from 1 Kings 8:56: "There hath not failed one word of all his good promise" (KJV).

13. *How has your faith been tested?*

14. *What promises of God do you hold onto when your faith is challenged?*

15. *Into what new area may faith now be leading you?*

Heroes in the Faith

To have faith is to believe something that you do not see but you believe in its existence. We still have many heroes in the faith of Jesus Christ. They are family members, next-door neighbors, salesclerks, longtime friends, and people we have only briefly met. These heroes in the faith should be celebrated, acknowledged, and encouraged. They are blueprints and models for others.

► *Think of your own “heroes in the faith” who have conquered, overcome, and obtained God’s promises because of their strong faith. List at least one of them for each day of the coming week and write a short letter, send a text, or make a phone call letting them know you consider them one of your “heroes in the faith” and why. Also, write here how you might be more like one of them in the future.*

KEY VERSE

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

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. —Hebrews 11:1, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of January 8 through January 14

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 119:97-112—God’s Word Lights My Path.
- Tues.** Matthew 11:25-30—Rest to the Weary.
- Wed.** Psalm 56—I Put My Trust in God.
- Thurs.** Hebrews 13:5-16—Trust in the Unchanging Lord.
- Fri.** John 14:18-27—I Will Not Leave You Orphaned.
- Sat.** 1 Corinthians 2:6-16—God’s Surpassing Wisdom.
- Sun.** Proverbs 3:1-12—Trust in the Lord.