



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Believing God is Worth It

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Hebrews 11:4-6

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*<sup>4</sup> By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. <sup>5</sup> By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. <sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

*(Pastor prays)*

If you come off the steps of our Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. onto the greenway called The Mall, you can proceed to a giant obelisk that stands over 500 feet tall called the Washington Monument that reminds us of the first President George Washington. From there you can walk through the World War II monument that reminds us of the “greatest generation.” And past the Reflecting Pool there sits the great liberator Abraham Lincoln in repose. As you look to the left of the Lincoln Memorial you will see the eerie tribute to those who fought and fell in the Korean War. But if you go to the right, you will find a monument that’s unlike any other. Most people refer to it as The Wall. It is the Vietnam War memorial. It is dug into the ground like a two-acre wound and 60,000 names are etched in two giant slabs of black granite brought to a high polish and designed so that when you read those names you also see a reflection of yourself.

It is an effect that is similar to what the preacher is doing here in Chapter 11 of Hebrews as he lists off Old Testament men and women who lived their lives by faith in the living God. And the purpose is not just to give us examples of heroes; the intent is to call your attention to the God of grace and His love for you in Christ. The intent is to call us to live our lives by faith in the one who loved us and purchased us at the cross by the blood of His son Jesus.

These people faced a threat much like the threat we face in 2022. Your faith in Christ will be tested. More than likely your faith in Jesus is being tested and today I want the word of God to strengthen your soul and gave you a joyful resolve as you head into the next week. I want you to trust Him knowing that by God's grace you are going to make it. I want you to see from this passage what faith is.

### Faith is Trust and Trusting God is Worth It

Let's take a look at it from the passage. Verse 4 is about Abel, verse 5 is about Enoch and verse 6 is the application. Let's take Abel and Enoch together.

#### **Faith says God is in control**

In this passage we are introduced to two men found in Genesis 4 and 5. Abel is in Genesis 4 and Enoch is in Genesis 5. Not much is written about either one of them, but we do have enough to know they are both examples of faith but at the very extreme ends of experience. Allow me to describe them for you and provide the contrast and make some application. Abel was the youngest son of the first two humans Adam and Eve. His name is the same word in Ecclesiastes, *Havil*, which means "vapor."

There is no record of him ever speaking in Genesis 4 but from all accounts he was a good young man. He did what was right, he worshipped God, and his is the first blood sacrifice. He didn't cause problems for his parents and yet his short life was snuffed out in the first murder in the Bible. It is a gruesome, senseless tragedy. Abel is one bookend who devastated his parents and scandalized early history. On the other hand you have Enoch in Genesis 5. He

lived 65 years and then had Methuselah and other children. He walked with God for more than 300 years after that and then God came and took him. He didn't just die a peaceful death; he didn't die at all! In fact, he's still living. He didn't get cancer or have a stroke or need a quadruple bypass. He didn't have diabetes or arthritis, he didn't die. He is the other bookend. And the preacher holds these two up to show that God is in control in both of these lives and he's given them to us to say, don't despair. You can draw a straight line to Romans 8:28. <sup>28</sup> *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* Abel loved God as much as Enoch did and for those who love God, you, all things work together. All your tears and frustrations, your hurt and sicknesses, Covid. They work together for good for those who are called, saved. That is the Gospel. According to His purpose. Faith has a quiet contented trust that God is in control.

### **Faith is displayed in character and obedience**

By faith, Abel did something. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Abel doesn't last but his testimony does. It is a testimony of the Gospel. In Genesis 4 we see hints of this in the type of offering and worship. Abel gives an animal sacrifice, a blood sacrifice that would point to our greatest need. I'm not saying Abel knew what he was doing and that he was saying turn to Jesus. I'm saying he was giving a testimony.

Our greatest need is to know that God is our holy creator who created all of us in His image. You have dignity because of the image of God in you. But that image of God in you has been disfigured because of sin. Sin separates us from God and we need our sins forgiven. We need Christ who lived perfectly, died on the cross to take the wrath of God away from us so that anyone who hears this and believes, and turns from their sin today, the promise of the Gospel is they will be saved.

It is a testimony of obedience. His offering to God was a display of his own devotion to the Lord. Your life, secured by grace through faith in the blood sacrifice of Jesus is then displayed in your inner character and outward obedience. And the gospel has an effect of both Christ on the inside and Christianity on the outside. I'm not saying that the way you live saves you, I'm saying that the one who saves you will dominate the way you live. And if you don't sense the domination in your life then you are in luck because God loves prodigals. He makes them sons and daughters and He will do that for you today. There is something else about Abel.

It is a testimony of legacy. In Genesis 4 the blood of Abel cries out and in Hebrews 12 the blood of Christ speaks better. Let's read verse 4 together. <sup>4</sup> *By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.* See the very end where although dead, he still speaks. His legacy is a simple one. By grace, through faith we are saved. Faith is the highway that leads to being right with God. If you are worried that you are not good enough to be a Christian, then you are right! Come to the end of your trying to be "good enough" because you are not. God made him righteous because of his faith. That's the great exchange that happens at the cross. That's the Gospel. God is in control. Faith is displayed in character and obedience.

### **Faith is an obvious lifelong journey**

Let's take Enoch's life and what we know about him from Genesis 5:21-24. <sup>21</sup> *When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah.* <sup>22</sup> *Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters.* <sup>23</sup> *Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years.* <sup>24</sup> *Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.* Enoch walked with God. What does that mean? When a young lady says she is interested in a young man I ask, "Does he walk with the Lord? Does he have a lifestyle that is characterized and marked by his devotion to the Lord Jesus? Does he have a closeness to

God and does he communicate with God? Does he have joy in the Lord by trusting God. Does he have pleasure in God? Does he worship God? What are the marks of a walk with God?"

A walk with God has a beginning. Genesis 5:21-22 tells us that Enoch lived to be 65 years old and then he had a son. That's when he started walking with God. He had a life changing experience that rattled his cage. There was a change. Conversion means a turning point – something changed. I'm not so concerned about somebody's past as I am about what is their story now.

A walk with God has effects, evidence and fruit. You love worship, love God, honor your parents, are honest, humble and kind. You love God's word and are striving for holiness. You have the fruit of the spirit. You have hatred of your own sin more than you hate other people's sin. You are submissive to the word and love God's church. In Genesis 5 there are genealogies, but Enoch was different because he walked with God.

When you walk with God you are going the same direction as Christ. That means you are swimming upstream in our society today. With the decline in sexual ethics, life ambitions, views on money or holding onto anger, you are going the other way. Walking with God means walking away from some things or even some people. When you are walking with God, you find yourself at odds with almost everybody around you. It could be something drastic, a headline sin, or it could be something that is just a distraction like TikTok or YouTube or Twitter. It could be going to the gym all the time. Sometimes walking with God means walking away from something.

Walking with God there is a joyful agreement with God. It's a joyful agreement that this is right. Matt and Christa Phipps' daughter got married yesterday and the ceremony, the entire event, was a joyful Christ-centered celebration of the Lordship of Christ. It's a joyful agreement of God's design. It's being in agreement with God on the good and holiness of God. It's agreement with God about your own sinfulness and need for forgiveness. It's agreeing with

God about Jesus as your substitute. It's agreeing with God on His right to have complete say in your life and be glad of it.

Faith says God is in control. Faith is displayed in character and obedience. Faith is an obvious life along journey. Now we get to verse 6 where the preacher gives us a summary and I want to offer a few quick statements about faith in Christ.

### **Faith is the only way to please God**

It is very obviously stated in verse six. *<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* 28 times in Chapter 11 the preacher starts a sentence with the words "by faith." This entire Bible is one long call to live by faith. It's by faith that we live in Galatians 2:20. It's by faith that we stand in Romans 11:20. It's by faith that we walk in 2 Corinthians 5:7 and it's by faith the devil is resisted in 1 Peter 5:8-9. It's by faith we are sanctified in Acts 26. It's by faith we have access to God in Ephesians 3. It's by faith that we fight the good fight in 1 Timothy 6. It's by faith that the world is overcome in 1 John 5, and it is the shield of faith that extinguishes the fiery arrows of the devil in Ephesians 6. Acts 16:31 tells us that it is by faith that sinners are saved and right here in Hebrews 11:6 the preacher boils it all down to two things. Don't you love when people get to the point? *<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* One builds on the other. Believe God is who He has revealed Himself to be, the God of the Bible. He is holy, just, loving, and merciful. He gives us grace through Jesus at the cross and we have repentance and faith. Believe that He cares. This is at the end of verse 6. He rewards those who seek Him. That it's worth it. Faith is trust and trust in God is worth it. Trust God with your soul. Trust God with your body. Trust God with your family. Trust God with your work. Trust God with your marriage. Trust God with your singleness. Trust God with your children. Faith is trust in God, and trust in God is worth it.

*(Pastor prays)*