

Scottie Alvarez 12-1-2024  
HEBREWS: PERSEVERE, HOLD ON, BELIEVE TILL THE END  
PART 11A: FAITH IN ACTION

Hello CVCHURCH! I hope you had a great Thanksgiving! The campus looks amazing! Thank you to the volunteer design & decorating teams! May you and your families enjoy a Christmas season filled with blessings. May the Lord return a hundredfold of what you have given to inspire our church to celebrate Jesus. Next Sunday is Explore Bethlehem! **[Show Explore Bethlehem graphic]** Sign up to serve on the clipboards going around so that you, too, gain the blessings of serving hundreds of our community guests. We have families here today who first attended because of this event, so grab a stack of invite cards and ask your friends and neighbors to this wonderful event! There are open opportunities to serve on parking and greeting! You put on a lanyard and participate in the event with your kids or grandkids. If you don't have kids, come anyway and just be your wonderful selves meeting all the guests. Today, we start Hebrews Chapter 11. There're only 13 chapters in Hebrews, so we're in the home stretch of our series **PERSEVERE, HOLD ON, BELIEVE TILL THE END**. Next week, December 8<sup>th</sup>, we begin our 5-part Christmas series **GOD THE SON** that takes us to 2025, and in the New Year we'll finish Hebrews. If you've missed any of this series, our **website cvchurch.com** and **YouTube channel** and **Facebook page**, both **@cvchurchla**, have everything you need. Video links you can share with friends, along with scripts and notes. If you do not get the email or text blast previews that we send out on Saturdays please let us know. We send out the script, notes, links, parking updates, and event signups. Use a Friends card and write your name, email, or phone number on it and drop it in the boxes in the hallway or foyer. You can also email [info@cvchurch.com](mailto:info@cvchurch.com) and we'll add you to the blasts. Let's re-focus on Jesus. Let's pray: *"Father God, we bring our hearts, minds, and wills to You. We open ourselves to Your Word. Grow our capacity to trust You. Grow our willingness to believe, in faith, for the things we've not yet seen. We thank You for the great ancestry of faith You've given us—all the examples of how You work through us in spite of our flaws and failures. We trust You with every part of our lives. Inspire us to persevere in our faith, follow You, and draw close to You, today, Jesus. AMEN."*

Follow me in your notes as I read the first of our 3 scripture sections for today, Hebrews Chapter 11, verses 1-6. As I read, ask yourself: **"How can I apply, to my life today, the lessons passed down by our faithful ancestors?"** This will allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us about persevering, holding on, believing till the end. Follow along with **Hebrews 11:1-6 – Great Examples of Faith – <sup>1</sup>FAITH SHOWS THE REALITY OF WHAT WE HOPE FOR; IT IS THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS WE CANNOT SEE. <sup>2</sup>THROUGH THEIR FAITH, THE PEOPLE IN DAYS OF OLD EARNED A GOOD REPUTATION. <sup>3</sup>BY FAITH WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE WAS FORMED AT GOD'S COMMAND, THAT WHAT WE NOW SEE DID NOT COME FROM ANYTHING THAT CAN BE SEEN. <sup>4</sup>IT WAS BY FAITH THAT ABEL BROUGHT A MORE ACCEPTABLE OFFERING TO GOD THAN CAIN DID. ABEL'S OFFERING GAVE EVIDENCE THAT HE WAS A RIGHTEOUS MAN, AND GOD SHOWED HIS APPROVAL OF HIS GIFTS. ALTHOUGH ABEL IS LONG DEAD, HE**

**STILL SPEAKS TO US BY HIS EXAMPLE OF FAITH. <sup>5</sup>IT WAS BY FAITH THAT ENOCH WAS TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN WITHOUT DYING—‘HE DISAPPEARED, BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM.’ FOR BEFORE HE WAS TAKEN UP, HE WAS KNOWN AS A PERSON WHO PLEASSED GOD. <sup>6</sup>AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD WITHOUT FAITH. ANYONE WHO WANTS TO COME TO HIM MUST BELIEVE THAT GOD EXISTS AND THAT HE REWARDS THOSE WHO SINCERELY SEEK HIM.”** To persevere, hold on, and believe till the end, put your faith into action like the heroes who came before us. Here’s the first fill-in in your notes: **I. God REWARDS those who sincerely SEEK Him**, and below that, part **A. Abel models FAITH in ACTION.** Let’s first define faith because this passage focuses on the nature and importance of faith. **Faith is active obedience to God by depending upon the reliability of His promises.** It is the confident belief in the promises of God that are not yet visible and a firm trust in what is to come despite the lack of physical proof. The preacher here declares that it is impossible to please God without faith. To approach Father God, that bold confidence that Jesus has given to us, we must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him. These two beliefs form the foundation of how we think about and relate to Father God through Jesus, and they motivate us to persevere in faith that God’s promises will come true especially when we have no tangible evidence. Pasadena’s Fuller seminary professor Don Hagner explains: **“The word ‘faith’ occurs in Hebrews far more often than in any other book of the New Testament, twenty-four times in this chapter alone. The sentence that begins verse 3 is the first of eighteen sentences in this chapter that begin with ‘by faith.’ The emphasis and cumulative effect are powerful. It is clear that for our author faith involves an active obedience to God rather than a passive belief in the truth of God. The heroes of faith... do not believe the incredible, nor do they believe blindly, without sufficient reason. On the contrary, they have reason to believe, and their acts of obedience are the result of their dependence upon the reliability of God’s promises. Nevertheless, they often must move out courageously into the unknown... Our author stresses repeatedly not the conviction or assurance of faith in the examples he reviews, but rather, the active expression of their faith... how faith substantiates, or gives substance to, what is promised, how it provides evidence of what is believed about unseen and hoped-for realities. Faith, indeed, has a way of making the future present and the unseen visible. Since faith is the cause of acts of obedience that are motivated by what is unseen and future, it calls attention to just those realities. Faith therefore brings them to expression. Faith makes concrete what is unavailable to our sight.”** In other words, faith is not passive, but an active conviction in what we cannot physically perceive. It’s confidence in the unseen. It’s the expectation of future blessings from the fulfillment of God’s promises. It’s hope for the future. It’s about belief that motivates action and displays trust in God’s character! Today we’ll hear about five Old Testament heroes of faith who believed God’s promises and acted courageously by stepping into the unknown. The 1<sup>st</sup> is Abel. **[Show graphic of Abel]** In Genesis Ch4, Abel, the 2<sup>nd</sup> son of Adam and Eve, is a shepherd who offers the first of his flock as a sacrifice, which God accepts favorably; however, his older brother Cain, a farmer, offers produce from the field which God does not accept. This sparks Cain’s jealousy and fuels his murder of Abel—the 1<sup>st</sup> recorded murder in the Bible. American professor Craig Koester says **“[Abel] was remembered**

as a righteous man, who deserved God's blessing. Some considered Abel to be the first martyr, whose example encouraged others to be faithful even to death. The Old Testament does not explain why God accepted Abel's sacrifice and rejected Cain's. Three possibilities might be considered, of which the third best fits Hebrews: (1) Quality of sacrifice. Since Abel offered ... the firstborn of the flock ... Abel's sacrifice was superior to Cain's offering of crops. (2) Manner of sacrifice. [Some Old Testament manuscripts fault] Cain's method of dividing the sacrifice ... but Hebrews makes no mention of faulty sacrificial procedure. (3) Character of the worshiper. The explicit point is that Abel offered in faith, and faith pleases God." Abel's faithful sacrifice, leading to betrayal and death, points us to Jesus. Abel's spilled blood speaks to us long after his death. Jesus' blood shouts long after His, but the blood of Jesus says something better and louder than the blood of Abel. Abel's blood cries out for vengeance after he was murdered, but Jesus' blood speaks a better word: forgiveness. Abel's faith shows us that death is not the end, and that we'll live with God after death, if we choose to accept Jesus as the best sacrifice of all. The next fill-in, part **B. Enoch DEMONSTRATES faith that PLEASES God**. Our second hero is the mysterious Enoch. [Show graphic of Enoch] In Genesis Chapter 5, Enoch, another descendant of Adam, lived in close fellowship with God throughout his life, modeling a deep relationship with God; but Enoch was 'taken away', meaning he didn't experience death but was transported to Heaven without dying. American professor George Guthrie says "The emphasis in the Enoch example rests even more squarely on the importance of one's spiritual posture. This faithful believer... was taken out of this world by God without experiencing death. Why? Because in his life he was 'commended as one who pleased God'; that is, he brought God pleasure. This... speaks of God's lack of pleasure toward one who shrinks back from commitment. By contrast, Enoch was resolute in his commitment, thus bringing God pleasure." How are you, like Abel, persevering faithfully despite persecution, betrayal, even death? The reward that comes from putting our faith into action is not necessarily material but rather God's commendation—us seeing, with our eyes, the fulfillment of His promises that we have believed by faith. Are you cultivating an intimate relationship with God? Enoch is the only one in Adam's genealogy in Genesis 5 whose death is not mentioned. Enoch didn't experience death. Jesus experienced the bitterness of death to conquer it for you. In your service to Him, where's your heart? Abel's and Enoch's were in the right place. Is yours? Are you too attached to the approval of others who draw you away from Jesus? How can you focus on His approval completely? This will draw you closer to Him and closer to each other.

Flip back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> scripture section for today and follow along as I read **Hebrews 11:7-12: <sup>7</sup>IT WAS BY FAITH THAT NOAH BUILT A LARGE BOAT TO SAVE HIS FAMILY FROM THE FLOOD. HE OBEYED GOD, WHO WARNED HIM ABOUT THINGS THAT HAD NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE. BY HIS FAITH NOAH CONDEMNED THE REST OF THE WORLD, AND HE RECEIVED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES BY FAITH. <sup>8</sup>IT WAS BY FAITH THAT ABRAHAM OBEYED WHEN GOD CALLED HIM TO LEAVE HOME AND GO TO ANOTHER LAND THAT GOD WOULD GIVE HIM AS HIS INHERITANCE. HE WENT WITHOUT KNOWING WHERE HE WAS GOING. <sup>9</sup>AND EVEN WHEN HE REACHED THE LAND GOD PROMISED HIM, HE LIVED**

**THERE BY FAITH—FOR HE WAS LIKE A FOREIGNER, LIVING IN TENTS. AND SO DID ISAAC AND JACOB, WHO INHERITED THE SAME PROMISE. <sup>10</sup>ABRAHAM WAS CONFIDENTLY LOOKING FORWARD TO A CITY WITH ETERNAL FOUNDATIONS, A CITY DESIGNED AND BUILT BY GOD. <sup>11</sup>IT WAS BY FAITH THAT EVEN SARAH WAS ABLE TO HAVE A CHILD, THOUGH SHE WAS BARREN AND WAS TOO OLD. SHE BELIEVED THAT GOD WOULD KEEP HIS PROMISE. <sup>12</sup>AND SO A WHOLE NATION CAME FROM THIS ONE MAN WHO WAS AS GOOD AS DEAD—A NATION WITH SO MANY PEOPLE THAT, LIKE THE STARS IN THE SKY AND THE SAND ON THE SEASHORE, THERE IS NO WAY TO COUNT THEM.”**

The next two fill-ins: **II. God seeks OBEDIENCE to His RISKY instructions.** And below that, part **A. Noah builds the ark TRUSTING God’s WARNING.** Our 3<sup>rd</sup> hero is Noah. **[Show graphic of Noah]** In Genesis Chapter 6-9, God warns Noah He’s going to flood the wicked Earth. It’s irredeemable. He instructs Noah to build a giant wooden ship, the ark, to save himself, his family, and two of every animal. Noah obeys God. He builds the ark, despite never having experienced a flood. Noah trusts God’s warning in faith over what his eyes tell him! Noah’s obedience demonstrates his reverence for God and his steadfast belief in the reality of God’s word. After the flood, Noah and his family emerge from the ark, and God establishes a covenant with them, marking a new beginning with the rainbow as a symbol of God’s promise to never again destroy the earth with a flood. Do you trust God’s promises? His Word promises us that Jesus is coming back to judge all of those who reject him and save all of those who persevere, hold on, and believe till the end. Are you ready for Jesus to return? Noah prepared for the future, even when it seemed a long way off. His faith in action judged the world’s rejection of God. What promises has God made you? What Godly risks has he asked you to take for Him? Remain true to His promises when it leads to being rejected by the world. Our next two fill-ins: part **B. Abraham leaves home SEEKING an ETERNAL city** and part **C. Sarah conceives BELIEVING God’s promise of a CHILD.** Our fourth and fifth heroes are Abraham & Sarah. **[Show graphic of Abraham & Sarah]** In Genesis Chapters 15-22, God promises to give Abraham and Sarah a vast lineage and to establish Israel’s Promised Land through them, despite their advanced age and Sarah’s infertility. God calls them to leave their home, travel at least 1500 miles on foot with all of their belongings and livestock, and settle in the Promised Land to start a new nation Israel filled with God’s people. Sarah struggles with disbelief and rebelliously convinces Abraham to have a child with her servant Hagar, resulting in the birth of Ishmael, who many believe becomes the forefather of Israel’s biggest enemy to this day, Mohammed and his Muslim followers. Abraham repeatedly lacks trust in God’s protection and power—and takes matters into his own hands, and yet, Abraham becomes that promised great nation Israel, from which Jesus comes. God finally, despite Abraham and Sarah’s sin and dysfunction, fulfills His promise by miraculously enabling them to conceive and birth Isaac, whose son Jacob, their grandson, fathers the nation of Israel. What promises has God made you? Has He sent you on a long journey without knowing the destination? Where are you tempted to take matters into your own hands? Don’t do it. Trust Him, even when His promises look impossible. Persevere in His promises. They believed ‘the city of God’ would come. Jesus built it. We are that

city! They believed their family would outnumber the stars in the sky. We are that family! Honor their faith by holding tight to your faith.

Our third and final scripture section for today: Flip back and follow along as I read **Hebrews 11:13-19**: <sup>13</sup> **All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.** <sup>14</sup> **Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own.** <sup>15</sup> **If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back.** <sup>16</sup> **But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.**

<sup>17</sup> **It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac,** <sup>18</sup> **even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted."**<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>19</sup> **Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead."** The next two fill-ins: **III. God has PREPARED our Heavenly HOMELAND.** and under that, part **A. Our spiritual ANCESTORS welcomed God's promises from AFAR.** Hagner writes: "The emphasis throughout Chapter 11 is ... on the ways in which they gave expression to their faith, embodied it, gave substance to it. Above all, faith is active in obedience. For our author, faith acts in a way that points unmistakably to the reality of what is not seen. Faith gives substance to the things unseen ... Faith [causes] those things to appear in [action] which are hoped for ... Faith, through its active character, gives substance to, that is, expresses the reality of things hoped for; it demonstrates the truth of things not yet seen." Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah—they trusted God's faithfulness to His promises, even though they didn't see their fulfillment in us during their lifetimes. Where is Jesus calling you to step out in faith? We conclude with part **B. Abraham trusts God's POWER to raise the DEAD.** In Genesis Chapters 21-22, Abraham and Sarah finally have their son Isaac, fulfilling God's promise, but they're tested when God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham readily obeys, traveling to the designated place and preparing to kill Isaac. An angel intervenes and gives a ram to sacrifice instead. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son—and seemingly ruin God's promise of descendants—because Abraham had the depth of faith that God would raise his son from the dead. Do you believe God raised His Son Jesus from the dead? That's the faith God calls us to as we celebrate communion.

**[Communion]** Open the wafer in your packet while I read **Luke 22:15-20**: "<sup>15</sup> **Jesus said, 'I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins.** <sup>16</sup> **For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.'** <sup>17</sup> **Then He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then He said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves.** <sup>18</sup> **For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.'** <sup>19</sup> **He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'**" Raise your wafer: "*Jesus, thank You for giving Your body on*

*the cross, in faith, trusting that Father God would raise You from the dead. You didn't just believe; You acted. We celebrate You. Thank You for Your obedience. We eat this wafer as a symbol of our hope in You, Lord Jesus."* Let's eat together. Now open your juice cup while I continue in Luke: **"<sup>20</sup>After supper he took another cup of wine and said, 'This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.'**" Raise your cup: *"Jesus, thank You for shedding Your blood to give us eternal life and hope. Thank You for our spiritual ancestors. They lived out their belief against all odds and they still point us to You. We celebrate Your faith displayed through them. We declare that we trust in Your promises, even the ones that seem so far away or even impossible. We drink this juice as a symbol of Your blood sealing and fulfilling all of Father God's promises in You Jesus. Amen."* Let's drink together. Kathe will close.