

**Hebrews**



**Promises  
Faithfully  
Kept**

**Hebrews 11.2-7 (ESV)**

**Emulate Their Everyday Faith**



Sociologists have conducted studies that have found that people tend to live up to the expectations they have for themselves. Part of those expectations are based on examples who have come before us and whom we think of as close to us or like us. It is important to us as people to learn from and be encouraged by family members and friends who have come before us. They are like us and have set an example of what is possible for us to achieve. There may be negative examples that serve as warnings to us, but there are going to be examples of virtue, even if we have to look beyond our natural family to others who have come before us. This chapter contains a list of those who are in our faith family lineage, offering a bond with us that is by blood, not direct natural lineage per se, but by a greater bond: Christ's blood. So let's be encouraged today by the enduring faithfulness of these first witnesses in the grand narrative of Scripture.

**2 For by [faith] the people of old  
received their commendation.**

**3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.**

**4 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.**

**5 By faith Enoch was taken up  
so that he should not see death,  
and he was not found, because  
God had taken him.**

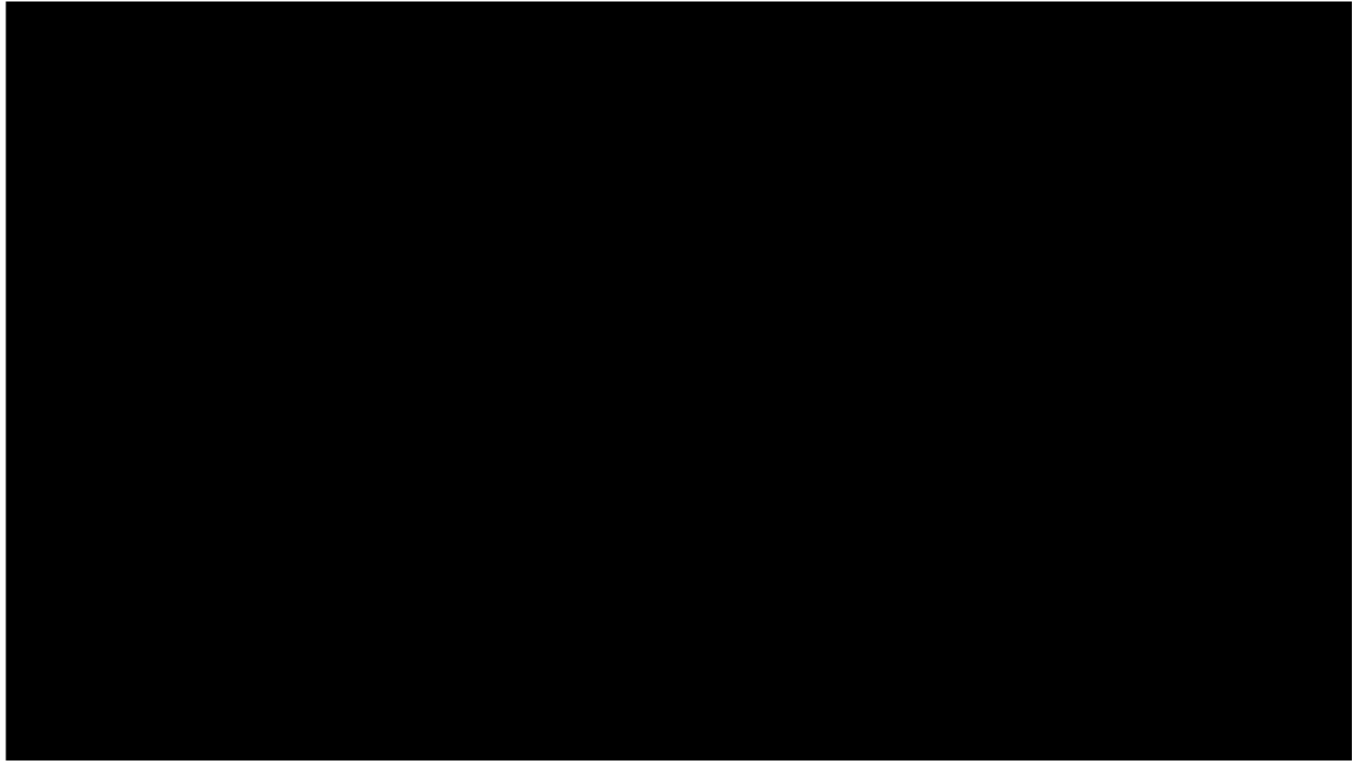


**Now before he was taken he  
was commended as having  
pleased God.**

**6 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.**

**7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.**

**By this he condemned the world  
and became an heir of the  
righteousness that comes by  
faith.**



Pray

# Those with persevering faith aim for God's approval after this life.

1) Those with persevering faith aim for God's approval after this life.

Last week we saw that Scripture, as God's living and active Word, calls us to read it through the eyes of Christian faith so that we are encouraged to endure through life's trials to the end, so that we embrace now what will be realized one day. This very letter promises that everything will be submitted to God and made new.

God speaks by His Word, including through how He speaks about the saints of old.

-None in this chapter set out to be heroes and some of the accomplishments listed were not major endeavors, sometimes even passive.

What is clear is that each listed was faithful in the small everyday way of walking with God so that they were found faithful when greater trials came.

Explanation: v. 2 received commendation from God himself. We should long to hear one day what Jesus says in a parable: Matt 25:21, 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

One day we will either receive commendation as those who have known and trusted Jesus or our condemnation will be made public as those who only pretended to be Christ's servants. Those who have not persevered with active trust, with living faith, they will be like the false servant who is thrown out from God's presence into the place of extreme suffering.

The people listed in Hebrews ch. 11 are those who have received commendation from God already. How did they receive their commendation? It is not that they experienced the fulfillment of longing for Messiah. Hebrews 11:39-40 tells us "39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was

promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

Still, God gave them his approving commendation for the world to read and hear through His recorded Word. The term for commendation can either refer to giving testimony in a general sense or to giving testimony in a positive commending sense. The latter is what is going on here. The term also appears 7 times in the book of Hebrews, each time with clear reference to the written Scriptures as being verbalized and spoken by God himself. God the judge is also the very One who confirms these OT saints' faith and faithfulness. He applauds His faithful ones for all to read through the story He wrote by means of the prophetic writers of Scripture.

Illustration/Application: Jesus tells us that if we are faithful in the small things then we will be faithful in the bigger matters.

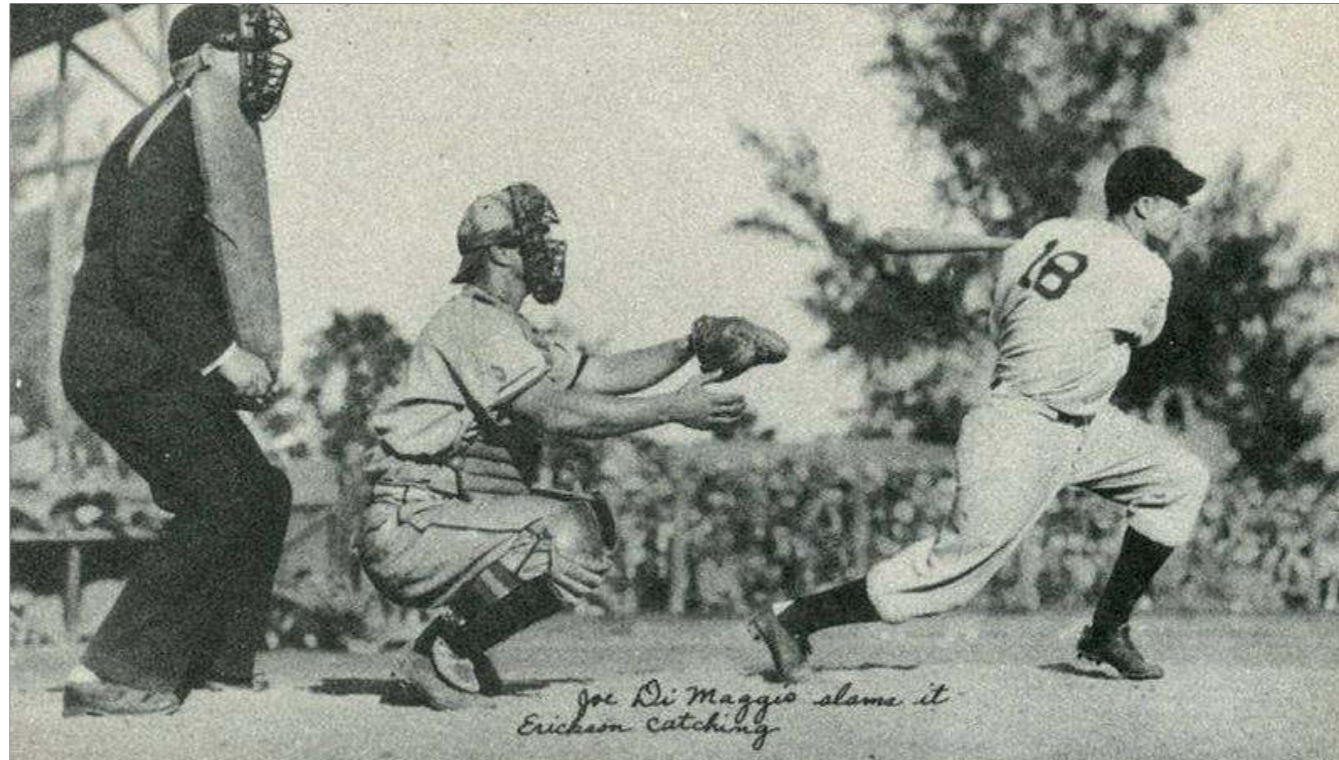


Illustration: Joe DiMaggio's base hits in consecutive games record

During the 1941 Major League Baseball (MLB) season, New York Yankees center fielder Joe DiMaggio recorded at least one hit in 56 consecutive games, breaking the MLB record for the longest hitting streak.

The streak ended on July 17, but Dimaggio did not let that deter him from continuing with an impressive season hitting the ball. He posted at least one base hit in each of the following 15 games as well; the streak-breaking contest was the only one in a 73-game span in which he did not have a hit. The Yankees won the AL pennant by a 17-game margin and defeated the Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1941 World Series.

in 1945, Tommy Holmes of the Boston Braves had hits in 37 consecutive games

The longest hitting streak in MLB from 1946 to 1977 was accomplished by DiMaggio's brother Dom, who had a 34-game run in 1949; no other player exceeded 31 games.[5]

In 1978, Pete Rose had a streak of 44 games, still 12 games short of the mark. Paul Molitor came within 17 games of the record, topping out at 39 games.[12]

Since 2000, no player has equaled the streaks of Rose or Molitor, with two players reaching 35 games and one reaching 38.

If a player wants to reach his record, they can't bypass game 1 to get to game 10.

If you want to be found faithful in the end, be found faithful today in the small things.



Lou Holtz was a national champion coach with Notre Dame. He had a an acronym for WIN. If you want to win, focus on What Is Next.

If you want to be found faithful in the end, be found faithful today in the small things. Those who love God are happy just to be with God and obeying Him, letting God determine what comes their way and letting God get the glory through them.



Transition: This chapter gives us us examples of those who have come before us. They are referred to as a cloud of witnesses at a sporting event, but they are not mere spectators. They are those who competed and finished their race.

Their examples for us are part of God's sustaining grace. We who are saved by grace are also kept and strengthened by grace. So as we read and are encouraged by the biblical examples of those who were faithful, we should recognize that such encouragement to persevere is part of God's work in sanctifying us and keeping is on track. Because God has justified those with true faith in Christ, the Spirit compels us to take up and read. They encourage us to look more intently upon Christ.

# Those with persevering faith have their lives point to Jesus.

2) Those with persevering faith have their lives point to Jesus.

(Look into the passages related to each name)

The first post-resurrection Christian sermons were sermons that went through the OT and how it all pointed toward the Christ and the gospel that is to be proclaimed.

Jesus—Luke 24

Peter—Acts 2

Stephen—Acts 7

Paul—Acts 13

(Examine Abel)

Active and passive pointing to Messiah (that which they do by faith and what is done to them bc of their faith)

Understand that there is context to their lives. The preachers starts with Creation to establish this line. It is the Creator who is also the Redeemer of those who have faith in Him and His promised One. In the midst of pronouncing judgment on Adam and Eve, God makes a two-part promise. There will be a faithful lineage and a rebellious lineage, with rebels following in Satan's line. Also, there would be a single male descendant who would crush Satan's head and undo all that Satan brought about, even as Satan struck at His heel. Gen. 3:15

Abel, who appears shortly after this promise, is recognized in this passage as the first human in Scripture to offer a pleasing sacrifice to the Lord.

This passage makes clear that Abel's sacrifice/gift itself was the better offering. He offered a sacrifice from the flock AND offered the fat portions. The text in Genesis doesn't say that Cain offered measly portions of the crop. So, without speculating, we can say Abel's offering was pleasing because either he offered the right sacrifice, the best of the sacrifice, or both. Textually speaking, sin had just entered the world prior to their sacrifices. The Temple system would later require for animals to die as substitutes for sin. People were to offer the best of them and the fatty portion of them. Abel made his offering prior to any explicit instruction. Perhaps Abel took cues from God himself, who sacrificed an animal, instead of killing Adam and Eve, in order to clothe them. Abel's offering of the proper gift pointed forward to the perfect Messiah who would die in our place.

Cain's gift was not approved. Even if he had been sincere in offering what was easily available to him, which we do not know for sure, sincerity does not excuse a wrong offering just bc is offered in ignorance. There is no name under heaven other than Jesus by which a person may be saved. Abel actively pointed to the Messiah by his right and pleasing sacrifice, which did bc he had faith.

Cain offered subpar sacrifice. Regardless of Cain's motives, God offered Cain an opportunity to repent. He could have made an offering like Abel. Instead, he chose to kill his brother.

Through his death Abel testified to the Messiah in a passive way. Abel did not arrange the meeting with Cain. Cain is the one who killed his brother. Abel was killed because of his faith. Through his death as one who actively expressed faith in a pleasing way to God, his life stands forth as a shining witness of faithfulness that God himself speaks about to the world. Jesus testified to Abel as being the first faithful martyr.

The religious leaders had Jesus himself killed for the same motive as Cain. Jealousy invited sin to crouch at their doors. Instead of putting sin to death, they put Jesus to death. Don't be surprised that the world seeks to do the same to His servants when they envy the peace we have with God, the peace we have from God.

#### Examine Enoch

He walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. (Gen. 5:24; see 5:21–24)

There is extremely little else we know about Enoch. But there is at least one other biblical reference to him, so we at least address it.

Another passage in the NT, in the book of Jude, is presented as if it is a quote by Enoch, but closer examination helps us realize Jude was referencing a popular work written just before the NT timeframe that his readers would be familiar with.

Jude 14-15: 14 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, 15 to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

In his letter, Jude offers testimony against slanderous, blaspheming people who weaseled their way into the church and who had begun teaching falsely and using the church for their benefits. In his list of testimonies against them, Jude uses a similar formula as the author of Hebrews. Starting early in the OT, he begins citing the negative examples of those who have appeared to be part of God's people but who were shown to be slanderers and blasphemers, those who were not of the saving faith, those who clearly did not endure in faith. He moves in a chronological fashion through recorded testimonies that warn us of the potential presence of false professors of faith and our need to deal with them if they show up. He ends with a known declaration about this danger from the apostles, most likely from members of the Twelve present in Acts 2. So he goes from OT record of negative examples and ends with a warning from the NT apostles. Sandwiched between the authoritative

record of the OT and the authoritative voice of the apostles in the NT is a reference to a book that was popular in the timeframe just before the NT. That book was attributed to Enoch, but it clearly was not written by Enoch and included all kinds of weird stuff in an attempt to apply the views of certain strains of Judaism. To gather authority for their views, the various authors who composed claimed that these were prophecies from Enoch after he had already ascended to be with God. So when Jude quotes the book of Enoch in between the OT and NT, that does not mean he is giving endorsement to the book as Scripture. Rather, he pulls a single quote from a popular book attributed to Enoch, a book that audience, including the wicked false professors, probably knew. This quote, though, was consistent with how God deals with the wicked throughout history in both the Old Testament and New Testament. So we can say yes, this will happen and so such wickedness of false professors is certainly condemned.

What is interesting and applicable to our passage today is that Enoch's simple life of faith communicates good news to those who have like faith and devastating news to those who do not.

Enoch's life gives an early indication resurrection, of ascension, and of God's judgment toward both the righteous and the wicked. For those in the line of faith, God will bring them home to be with him forever in a way that death cannot overrule. For those in the line of rebellion, they do not get that promise. When we read through the OT, we see both a sadness for Sheol, the pit into which we descend at death as bodies, and of confidence that those who have trusted God will be with him after death, as David said about himself after hearing of his child's death. So that prior groundwork is available for the NT writers to say that to be apart from the body is to be with the Lord while still acknowledging that our bodies matter. But this testimony about Enoch in Genesis 5:24 precedes those teachings about Sheol, the pit or grave. As early as Enoch, God was preparing us to see that He has the power to overcome and override death and that the Man who walks rightly with Him would ascend into God's very presence. And Christ our Lord has resurrected and then ascended into God's very presence.

#### Examine Noah

Noah was a man who experienced God's favor and grace and so walked with God, even when no one else in the world did. Because he trusted God in the day-to-day, Noah trusted God for something he couldn't see yet. It had never rained. I like how Thom Schreiner puts it. "Noah exercised faith and thus was persuaded that what was not yet seen would become a reality" (346).

Active: Bc of godly fear, Noah constructed the means of his family's deliverance. Noah was presented with the option of who to fear and believe. He either could believe God and so build the ark, or he could fear the mocking voice his neighbors.

Genesis 6:8 tells us that Noah was one who found favor with the Lord. God graciously called Noah to Himself, with Noah responding in faith. So he built the giant boat as God commanded. He apparently did not just build. He was declaring a message through his building and spoke about it. According to 2 Peter 2:5 reports that Noah was a herald of righteousness. He warned of the impending judgment of God and the need to respond in faith and repentance. How did the people respond? Jesus tells us, "They were eating and drinking and marrying and giving away in marriage up to the day that Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them."

As 1 Peter 3 points out, Noah's trust to enter the ark and be saved from the watery judgement anticipated our salvation that is by faith in Christ, who saves us from God's wrath, with water baptism symbolizing this for the believer.

Noah was obedient because of his faith, but it was the Lord who saved. The Lord gave the foresight, the plans, the animals, and even the closing of the door to the ark according to Genesis 7:16.

The Lord used Noah to point to the Messiah both in Noah's active faithfulness and brought about a message through Noah's life.

Passive1: Noah condemned the world. Did Noah go out and say, "I condemn you?" No, it does not appear so. But his exclusive claim about salvation only by means of

entering an ark was received as condemnation to the choices and lifestyles of the people around him. Do you ever have this interaction:

So, you are a Christian?

Yes.

So I don't believe and live like you. You're condemning me.

No, I'm not, but I understand how my faith makes you feel condemned. God actually says that everyone who does not believe in Jesus already stands condemned.

You're just feeling what God says is true if you don't look to Jesus by faith.

Those not saved in the ark were destroyed in the torrent of God's wrath. Those who do not look to Christ by faith will be destroyed in the fury of God's wrath.

Side note on rainbow (by water->constant reminder not just of God's gracious covenant but also off his specificity. It won't be water one day but by fire and those who rebelled will experience a fire that never dies away.)

Passive2: received an inheritance

People don't declare themselves heirs. I have no right to approach Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk and inform either that I am to be granted his wealth. For Noah to be declared an heir of righteousness, it had to be God making this declaration. We see this declaration through how God speaks of Noah by the written Word. He is part of this line of faith that extends from Genesis 3:15 all the way forward to our Savior.

People should want the same declaration made about them as was made of Noah, that we are heirs of the kingdom. Being right with God is of greater wealth than any man's estate. Salvation cannot be bought by money but the character of the saved is shown through our faith and faithfulness.

**Those with persevering faith  
learn from the everyday trust of  
prior witnesses.**

3) Those with persevering faith learn from other the everyday trust of prior witnesses.

Did you notice the repetition “By faith?”

Each OT saint is introduced that way. We just talked about how their lives pointed forward to Jesus through how they lived.

-none of the people in this chapter set out to be great.

:don't think of them as a hall of heroes but as the beginning of the cloud of witnesses to enduring faith

We are not to try to become like them in doing great things. We are to emulate them in how they believed and therefore lived faithfully in everyday life. As we do, we will be tested. If we have been faithful in the smaller, everyday sacrifices, Jesus tells us we will be faithful in the bigger sacrifices.

The basis from which their lifestyles arose was their faith in the God who had promised salvation.

Our actions are driven by our beliefs. People want to be, need to be consistent. You will live consistently according to your beliefs and your actions will reveal and reinforce your actual beliefs. So we can trace any particular sin we commit to an improper belief about God, His Word, us, the world, etc. In converse, one will only be able to live a life that is pleasing to God by faith.

Faith is the essential basis for approaching God. You must trust that God actually is good, loving, just, and the gracious Giver if you are to approach Him by faith in

Christ.

Abel believed God about His deadly judgment on sin and about His willingness to accept a worthy sacrifice that he offered it, even as it would cost him his life.

Enoch believed and trusted that God still desired to walk with people, as God never changes, though people do. So when no one else cared to, Enoch made it a habit to walk with God because He trusted Him.

Noah was willing to build a structure he never heard of and suffer social ridicule and isolation because he had trusted God to live differently than the world. He believed God was his life and salvation and so built a boat that would symbolize both God's salvation for those with faith in Christ and condemnation for all who do not enter in. He and his family were saved from the flood because of belief in the promising God, because of trust in the Creator-Redeemer.

The preacher fronts each intro with that same wording, "By faith," for the sake of emphasis.

If you know Christ by saving faith, you will persevere. Only those who persevere are shown to have faith.

Are your consistent actions pointing to the claim that you have faith that endures?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE CREATOR EXISTS? DO YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN ACTUALLY APPROACH HIM BY CHRIST? DO YOU TRUST THAT HE IS TRUE AND HONEST? DO YOU TRUST THAT HE WILL REWARD THOSE WHO PERSEVERINGLY COME TO HIM?

[mention different difficult scenarios you know Christians go through, including possibly in Grace]

Look to and learn from the witnesses to Christ who have come before us. We want to receive the commendation that they did from God. We want our story to be one in which Jesus says we loved him in our actions because of the faith in us. Do you want to hear, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into my rest."? Then look to Jesus by faith and let God lead today.



