



SUNDAY SCHOOL AUGUST 10, 2025

Prayer:

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New Testament

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

THE MEANING OF FAITH & THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

(Written to the Jewish Hebrew Christians)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith, with Sarah's involvement, he received power of procreation, even though he was too old, because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore, from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better homeland, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

OVERVIEW

Hebrews 11:1–3, 8–16 is part of what many refer to as the "Faith Hall of Fame." These verses define faith and celebrate those who lived by it. The author lifts up biblical figures—especially **Abraham** and his family—as examples of trusting in God's promises despite not seeing their fulfillment in their lifetimes. This passage speaks to endurance, hope, and the eternal orientation of true faith.

See "Faith Hall of Fame" Addendum

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Authorship & Audience:** Traditionally attributed to Paul, though modern scholars question this; possibly written by an anonymous Jewish Christian author. The audience appears to be Jewish Christians undergoing persecution or tempted to abandon their faith and return to Judaism.

See "Why was the book called Hebrews?" Addendum

- **Book Theme:** Hebrews is centered on **Christ as the ultimate high priest** and the **supremacy of faith** over the old covenant's rituals. It exhorts believers to endure in faith as they await the "better country" (v.16).
- **Chapter 11 Theme:** Serves as a climax of theological argumentation from earlier chapters, showing that *faith—not law—has always been the basis for righteousness.*



HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Jewish-Christian Struggle:** Hebrews was likely written before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (AD 70) or shortly after. Jewish Christians were marginalized by both the Roman Empire and mainstream Judaism.
- **Rome and Identity:** Christians were increasingly seen as a distinct group rather than a Jewish sect. This caused friction, especially for Jewish converts whose identity, culture, and safety were tied to their Jewish roots.
- **Faith in Exile:** Like Abraham who left home without a map, these early Christians were metaphorical exiles—spiritually and socially alienated from both the Jewish world and Roman society.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

Event/Person	Approximate Date	Relevance
Abraham's Journey	~2000 BCE	Prototype of faith; obeyed God's call without full knowledge
Moses & the Law	~1300 BCE	Later faith heroes cited after our selected verses
Early Christianity Emerges	~30–100 CE	Readers of Hebrews are urged to follow a tradition of faithful endurance
Likely Writing of Hebrews	~60–70 CE	Addressing second-generation Christians during persecution and crisis of identity

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Metaphor of Faith as a Journey

Faith is portrayed not as passive belief, but as an *active, forward-moving journey*. Abraham's story becomes a metaphor for *trusting the invisible*. He left home (comfort, security, familiarity) to move toward a promise he would not personally receive.

“They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth” (v.13).

This is more than biographical—it's theological anthropology: humans of faith are always out of place in the world, always reaching for a reality that transcends the present.

Modern Day & Grant County, Indiana Context

- **Faith Without Certainty:** Many in Grant County face economic uncertainty, political frustration, and generational change. Just like Abraham stepped into the unknown, many here are called to trust and act without full assurance—whether it's investing in family, church, community development, or local youth.
- **Leaving ‘Home’:** Some are leaving traditional structures—like institutional religion or factory jobs—and wondering what lies ahead. The passage speaks to this: *You don't have to see the whole picture to act in faith.*



- **“Better Country” Desire:** The passage’s longing for “a better country, that is, a heavenly one” resonates with those who seek more than material success or political wins. It speaks to a spiritual yearning for dignity, peace, and justice—an eternal orientation amidst everyday struggles.

SUMMARY

Hebrews 11:1–3 begins with a **definition of faith**: it is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. The passage affirms that the ancients were commended for this kind of trust.

Verses 8–16 highlight **Abraham’s faith journey**: leaving his homeland, living as a foreigner, trusting in promises not yet fulfilled, and seeing himself and his descendants as pilgrims on the way to a “better country.” These verses underscore the idea that real faith looks forward, often with no earthly guarantees.

The passage ends by affirming that **God is not ashamed to be called their God**, because they lived in light of His promises—not in fear of the present.



Gospel

Luke 12:32-40

WATCHFUL SLAVES

(Jesus speaking to the crowds on his way to Jerusalem)

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks.

“Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night or near dawn and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

“But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

OVERVIEW

Luke 12:32–40 is a continuation of Jesus’ teachings about possessions, worry, and the nature of the Kingdom of God. This passage shifts the focus from material concerns to spiritual preparedness and watchfulness. It contains three connected messages:

1. **God’s generous gift of the Kingdom** (v.32),
2. **An invitation to detach from earthly wealth** (vv.33–34), and
3. **A parable about readiness and divine reversal** (vv.35–40), where servants are served by the master.

It’s both comforting and urgent—offering assurance of God’s care and a challenge to stay alert for Christ’s return.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage follows Jesus’ discourse on the futility of anxiety (vv.22–31) and the parable of the rich fool that we talked about last week (vv.13–21), reinforcing the themes of:

- Prioritizing heavenly treasures over earthly ones.
- Living in active expectation of God’s reign.
- The surprising and generous nature of God’s grace.

The text leans heavily on **apocalyptic readiness**—common in Jesus’ teachings—but also on **radical generosity** and **trust in God**. This is a core Kingdom ethic: live as though the Kingdom has already begun.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. Economic Context



Jesus was speaking to a society where wealth and possessions were not evenly distributed, and social status was rigid. For Jesus to say, “Sell your possessions and give alms” was **counter-cultural and sacrificial**. It undermined both Roman and Jewish systems that were based on hierarchy, patronage, and accumulation.

2. Political Context

Rome’s economy and power were built on exploitation, taxation, and control of land and labor. Jesus’ call to be ready for a different Kingdom was a **political critique** of the Roman Empire and the temple elite aligned with it. “Be ready” was not just spiritual advice—it was a warning of a coming **divine reordering** of power.

3. Household Imagery

The “master and slaves” parable would be shocking to ancient listeners. For a master to return and serve his slaves would have been seen as a **radical inversion** of normal roles—a clear metaphor for **Jesus’ servanthood and the upside-down values of the Kingdom**.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Date of Event:** Jesus likely spoke these words during his **journey to Jerusalem** (Luke 9:51–19:27), sometime between **28–30 CE**.
- **Date of Composition:** The Gospel of Luke was written **around 80–90 CE**, a few decades after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE.
- **Early Christian Communities** (when Luke was written) would have heard this passage as both **comfort in persecution** and a call to maintain spiritual **vigilance** and **communal generosity**, especially as they awaited Jesus' return.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Scholars see this as a **parable of reversal and readiness**. The master becomes the servant—echoing Jesus at the Last Supper. The metaphor challenges the comfortable, warns the complacent, and exalts humility and alertness.

In **modern Grant County, Indiana**, this could speak directly to:

- **Farmers and landowners** who consider their land as legacy: the text gently suggests letting go of possessiveness and embracing Kingdom values of **generosity over inheritance**.
- **Retirees and planners** focused on material security: the parable reminds them to prioritize **eternal values**, not just estate planning.
- **Working-class families and factory workers** who often live in vigilance—Jesus affirms that spiritual readiness doesn’t require wealth or privilege, only attentiveness and faithfulness.

The imagery of **lamps lit and doors ready to open** evokes both rural and small-town imagery: porch lights on, always ready to receive a neighbor—or, in this case, **Christ himself**.

The warning about the **unexpected hour** fits a region where weather, farming, or market changes can come suddenly—being **prepared for the unexpected** is a lived reality.

SUMMARY

Luke 12:32–40 reassures the disciples of God's generous love while calling them to **detach from materialism** and live with **readiness and faith**. Jesus portrays a Kingdom where roles are reversed, where **generosity is eternal wealth**, and where God—unexpectedly—**serves the faithful**.



The message:

- Do not be afraid—**you are already loved.**
- Let go of what you can't keep—**invest in what lasts.**
- Be ready—**live each day as though Jesus could return tonight.**

In our modern context, it's a call to **generous living, spiritual alertness, and active hope**—whether in the fields of Grant County, the aisles of a factory, or the pews of a rural church.



Addendum

Why was the book called “Hebrews”?

The title *Hebrews* is not part of the original text—it was added later by early church tradition. It reflects the **intended audience** and the **themes of the letter**.

- **The Audience: Jewish Christians (“Hebrews”)**
 - The book is addressed to **Jewish believers in Jesus** who were well-versed in:
 - The Old Testament (especially the Torah and Psalms)
 - The priesthood and temple practices
 - Jewish covenantal theology
 - These believers were likely **struggling with persecution**, identity crisis, or temptation to return to the old Jewish religious system. The author writes to **encourage them to remain faithful** to Jesus as the fulfillment of all the Hebrew Scriptures.
- **The Content: Hebrew Roots, Fulfilled in Christ**

The book is packed with:

- **References to Old Testament figures** (Abraham, Moses, Melchizedek, etc.)
- **Explanations of Jewish rituals** (like sacrifices and priesthood)
- **Exhortations to faith**, drawing on the examples of Israel’s past

This heavy use of Hebrew scripture, history, and thought patterns justifies the title.

- **Authorship Is Unclear, but the Audience Is Not**

We don't know for sure who wrote it (some say Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, or even Priscilla), but **it's clear the author was writing to Jews who had accepted Jesus—trying to connect their heritage to their new faith.**

- **Early Church Tradition**
 - The title “To the Hebrews” appears in the **earliest Greek manuscripts**, likely added by the 2nd century.
 - Church Fathers like **Clement of Alexandria** and **Origen** preserved and used this title, recognizing that the letter had a **Hebraic theological foundation**.

In Summary

The book is called **Hebrews** because:

- It was **written to Jewish (Hebrew) Christians**,
- It explains how Jesus fulfills **Hebrew Scriptures and covenantal promises**, and
- It emphasizes a **continuity from Judaism to Christianity** through Christ.



The “Faith Hall of Fame”

The “Faith Hall of Fame” in Hebrews 11 is a stirring roll call of biblical figures who lived by faith, often in the face of great uncertainty, suffering, or delay. Here’s a breakdown of the key figures included, along with a brief description of what made their faith notable:

The Faith Hall of Fame – Hebrews 11

1. **Abel (v.4):** Offered a better sacrifice than Cain. His faith made his offering acceptable, and he is remembered as righteous even after death.
2. **Enoch (v.5–6):** Walked faithfully with God and was taken up (did not die). His life pleased God, and his example shows that faith is essential to please God.
3. **Noah (v.7):** Built an ark to save his family from the flood, even though no one had ever seen rain like that. His faith condemned the world and preserved righteousness.
4. **Abraham (vv.8–19):** Left his homeland, lived in tents, and was willing to sacrifice Isaac. His story dominates the chapter as a prime example of trusting God without seeing the full promise.
5. **Sarah (v.11):** Though old and barren, she had faith that God would fulfill His promise, and she bore Isaac.
6. **Isaac (v.20):** Blessed Jacob and Esau regarding their future, trusting in God’s promises beyond his own lifetime.
7. **Jacob (v.21):** Blessed his sons and worshipped as he was dying, holding to God's covenant promises.
8. **Joseph (v.22):** Spoke of the Exodus while still in Egypt and gave instructions about his bones—faith in a future he wouldn’t see.
9. **Moses’ Parents (v.23):** Hid Moses as a baby, defying Pharaoh's command because they trusted God more than fear.
10. **Moses (vv.24–28):** Chose to suffer with God's people rather than enjoy palace life in Egypt. Led the Israelites out, kept the first Passover, and endured by "seeing Him who is invisible."
11. **Israelites (v.29):** Crossed the Red Sea by faith, trusting that God would part the waters.
12. **Rahab (v.31):** A Gentile and a prostitute, she welcomed the Israelite spies and was saved because of her faith.

Group of the Unsung (vv.32–38)

The author summarizes others, saying:

“Time would fail me to tell of...”

- **Gideon** (Judges 6-8) – Defeated the Midianites with a small army
- **Barak** (Judges 4-5) – Led Israel with Deborah against Sisera
- **Samson** (Judges 13-16)– Had flawed faith but played a role in delivering Israel
- **Jephthah** (Judges 11-12) – Delivered Israel, despite a complicated legacy
- **David** (1 Samuel 16, 1 Kings 2) – Shepherd king, faithful yet flawed
- **Samuel & the Prophets** (1 Samuel 1-25)– Spoke truth and endured persecution

The Unknown Heroes (vv.35–38)

These faithful ones:

- Were tortured
- Faced jeers, flogging, chains, and imprisonment



- Were stoned, sawn in two, killed by the sword
- Wandered in deserts and caves

They are unnamed, but their faith is **no less honored**.

"The world was not worthy of them." (v.38)

Summary

The *Faith Hall of Fame* isn't just a list of perfect people. It's a testimony that:

- Faith is **trusting God's promises**, even without evidence
- God honors both **celebrated figures** and **anonymous martyrs**
- Faith isn't about being flawless—it's about **being faithful**