

• *Accomplishments and triumphs of faith*

(i) *No examples telling how these people came to saving faith – all illustrate works of faith*

(ii) *All the examples are unique – not details to be copied*

Abel founded the sacrificial system

The idea of blood sacrifice from God

• *Later incorporated in the Mosaic law*

• *Lasted beyond his lifetime*

• *Entered into rest*

Enoch demonstrated God's power over death

• *Persistent faith – 'walking with God' and the conviction that he was pleasing to God*

There are about twenty characters mentioned in Hebrews 11:4–31. Then the writer turns to remind us of some of the accomplishments of faith^{□1} and the times when these people triumphed over what seemed to be defeat^{□2}.

Two general observations are important. (i) In no case are the examples of 11:4–31 telling us how these people came to their first salvation. Abel **already** had saving faith when he expressed his faith in animal-sacrifice. Enoch **already** had saving faith when he went to God without dying. The examples focus upon **works** of faith that are done **after** the first salvation of the believers concerned. This is exactly what our writer wants to say to his people. By faith and patience they are to take part in carrying forward the kingdom of God. (ii) These people all did something that had never been done before; and what they did was never done again. No one built an ark in precisely the same way that Noah did. No one ever had to do it again. No one ever destroyed a city by marching around it blowing trumpets before Joshua and no one ever did it again. The examples make the point that God has a personal and individual will for our lives that will not come by copying the details of the callings of others.

1. **Abel founded the sacrificial system.** ⁴*By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. Through this he received testimony from God that he was righteous. God gave testimony about his gifts and through this, although he has died, he still speaks.* Many of the ingredients of what our writer wants to say are found in the story of Abel. (i) Abel apparently got the idea of being righteous before God by blood-sacrifice from God himself. God had sacrificed an animal to clothe Adam and Eve^{□1}. Faith is based on what God says of what is known to be the will of God. Cain's sacrifice seems to have been his own idea based on how much he worked as a farmer 'by the sweat of his face'^{□2}. (ii) Abel achieved something for God. What he did was the beginning of the sacrificial system (later incorporated into Mosaic law) which made the point that God can only be approached by the death of a substitute. His sacrifice pointed to Christ. (iii) He achieved something for God that lasted beyond his own lifetime. His faith and his message are still relevant for us today. (iv) God in effect said 'Well done!' to Abel. He 'entered into rest'. He received the reward of his faith.

2. **Enoch demonstrated God's power over death.** ⁵*By faith Enoch was taken from this life so that he might not experience death, and he could not be found because God had taken him away. For before his being taken up he received testimony that he had pleased God.* Our writer is not only following an Old Testament sequence. There is also a logic in the topics. Christian faith is first faith in creation^{□1}. Then it is faith in the 'blood of the lamb'^{□2}. It is faith in God's power over death^{□3}. The ingredients of persistent faith are also seen in Enoch. At the time of his being taken to heaven he already had faith. He had been 'walking with God'^{□4}. God promised Enoch that he would not die, and by persistence in faith it turned out the way God had said. Enoch achieved something for the kingdom of God. He gave a rare demonstration that God has power over death. Faith was assurance, for Enoch. He lived with the God-given conviction that he pleased God. Even before the days of the outpouring of the Spirit the Spirit gave him witness that he was a child of God and was pleasing to God. He too had 'entered into rest'.

□1 11:32-35a

□2 11:35b-38

□1 Genesis 3:21

□2 see Genesis 3:19

□1 11:3

□2 11:4

□3 11:5-6

□4 Genesis 5:24

• We must believe God is there

• We must also believe in reward!

Noah rescued his family

• The same key elements in persistent faith

• 'An heir as the result of the righteousness of faith'

• Parallel in Romans 4 – Abraham's offspring

• A great example of our writer's themes

To make sure that we get the point of what he is saying, Hebrews adds a remark so that we learn from these examples. ⁶*Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever comes to God must believe that he is there and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him.* We notice that our writer is thinking of **continuing** faith. Without persistence in faith God will not be pleased with us. Again the point previously made that we must 'draw near' to God is repeated. Faith in this situation involves two things. We must believe God is there. When we face adversities it sometimes feels as if God is absent! We must also believe in reward! This is a very strong statement about reward. Anyone who does not believe in reward is to some extent displeasing to God!

Noah rescued his family. ⁷*By faith Noah, after he had been warned about events that no one had yet seen, moved with holy fear, built an ark for the salvation of his household. In so doing he condemned the world and through the righteousness which is by faith became an heir.* Again we notice key elements in persistent faith. (i) It was based upon what God said. (ii) It led to practical action. Noah's faith persisted to the point where he was doing the will of God. (iii) His action highlighted his faith and also highlighted the unbelief of his contemporaries. He stood out against the unbelief of those around him and so was in himself their condemnation. (iv) He became an heir of reward.

There is an important technicality here. In Greek, the phrase 'heir of the righteousness that is by faith' is not an objective genitive (as if righteousness is what is inherited). The genitive is a 'genitive of source'. Just as 2 Corinthians 4:7 speaks of surpassing power being 'of God' (that is, **from** God), so Hebrews 11:7 speaks of being 'an heir of the righteousness of faith' (that is, 'an heir **from** the righteousness of faith' or in plain English 'an heir as the result of the righteousness of faith'). It does not mean that faith 'inherits justification' (which would be an unprecedented use of 'inherit'); it means that those who are justified by faith become people destined to inherit the rewards of God. The parallel is Romans 4:13. The promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through 'the righteousness of faith'. Noah is a great example of everything our writer has been saying. He was saved by faith alone. He 'found grace' – and nothing else but grace contributed to his initial righteousness before God. But then his faith persisted. He heard God's voice (remember Hebrews 3:15!). He refused to draw back despite the opposition of the surrounding world. He achieved something for God. He was motivated by the thought of what he would inherit. Salvation opens up the way for inheritance. These are the themes of Hebrews and our writer finds them all in the story of Noah.



slices.org.uk

Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

| Slices for the Nations | Slices for Sponsors | Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the Slices web site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the Slices web site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations |

To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk
 Details of the availability of *Preaching Through The Bible* books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk