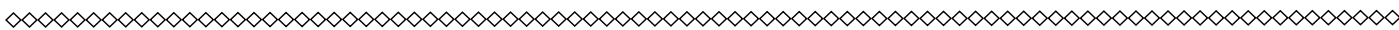Pastor of the International Baptist Church in Cologne Germany.

Sermon Brief
Text: Heb. 11:1-7
Title: Living in Faith
Lorin L. Cranford

Seeking to faithfully proclaim the whole council of God in scripture!

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INTRODUCTION

"Living....?" In Christ. In Joy. Cautiously. In Confidence. In Love. Over the past several weeks we have touched on Christian living in these perspectives. Today the emphasis is 'Living in Faith.' Christian faith is without question foundational to spiritual existence. In chapter eleven of the Letter to the Hebrews, the biblical writer sets forth the priority of faith by allduing to a list of individuals in the Old Testament who exemplify the kind of faith in God that is so important. I want today to look at the first three examples he describes in the so-called Primeval History section of Geneses chapters one through eleven. Turn with me to Hebrews 11:1-7.

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval.

3 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.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and "he was not found, because God had taken him." For it was attested before he was taken away that "he had pleased God." 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. 7 By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.[1]

The writer of this New Testament document wrote to Jewish Christians in the middle of the first century to encourage them to remain faithful to Christ as God's Son and their Savior. We don't know much more about the circumstances of the writing of the letter. But it is clear that his readers were under some pressure to abandon their Christian faith in favor of their Jewish religious heritage. So the writer presents Christ as the far superior way of commitment to God and as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of a Savior. In our text he reaches back to the Old Testament and selects a number of individuals who exemplified genuine faith in God as the role model for Christians to follow. These individuals lived in and by their faith in God, thus experiencing powerful blessing and the reward of a life pleasing to the Heavenly Father.

From the discussion in Heb. 11:1-7 we can hopefully gain important insights into living by faith.

BODY

I. Faith: the idea, vv. 1-2

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval.

11.1 Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων. 11.2 ἐν ταύτῃ γὰρ ἐμαρτυρήθησαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι.

The connection of these two short sentences to what precedes is defined by the conjunction δὲ, translated as 'now' in the NASB and NRSV. The word sequence of the first Greek sentence highlights a connection with "is faith...." implying a link back to the preceding sentence: ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐσμὲν ὑποστολῆς εἰς ἀπώλειαν ἀλλὰ **πίστεως** εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς ("But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have **faith** and so are saved."). Thus, chapter eleven attempts to 'flesh out' the implications of a faith

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[1] 11.1 Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων. 11.2 ἐν ταύτῃ γὰρ ἐμαρτυρήθησαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι.

11.3 Πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι.

11.4 Πίστει πλείονα θυσίαν Ἄβελ παρὰ Κάϊν προσήνεγκεν τῷ θεῷ, δι' ἧς ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος, μαρτυροῦντος ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ δι' αὐτῆς ἀποθανὼν ἔτι λαλεῖ. 11.5 Πίστει Ἐνὼχ μετετέθη τοῦ μὴ ἰδεῖν θάνατον, καὶ οὐχ ηὑρίσκετο διότι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός. πρὸ γὰρ τῆς μεταθέσεως μεμαρτύρηται εὐαρεστηκέναι τῷ θεῷ· 11.6 χωρὶς δὲ πίστεως ἀδύνατον εὐαρεστῆσαι· πιστεῦσαι γὰρ δεῖ τὸν προσερχόμενον τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἔστιν καὶ τοῖς ἐκζητοῦσιν αὐτὸν μισθαποδότης γίνεται. 11.7 Πίστει χρηματισθεὶς Νῶε περὶ τῶν μηδέπω βλεπομένων, εὐλαβηθεὶς κατεσκεύασεν κιβωτὸν εἰς σωτηρίαν τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ δι' ἧς κατέκρινεν τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τῆς κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνης ἐγένετο κληρονόμος.

that stands up strong against persecution and hardship.[2] This context influences the tone and direction that the writer takes in amplifying the understanding of faith. He is not defining faith hypothetically and abstractly. Instead, he is describing faith that provides the foundation to withstand persecution. This angle is important when seeking to grasp his description in the first two verses of chapter eleven.

The connection between the two sentences is defined by the causal conjunction γὰρ, translated as either 'for' (NASB) or 'indeed' (NRSV). These two translations reflect either the causal (NASB) or explanatory (NRSV) roles of the Greek conjunction. Both are legitimate possibilities of meaning. The causal meaning is more likely given the content of the two sentences. The second sentence provides a basis of support for the idea in the first sentence.

The description: "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων). For the writer, a persecution resistant faith is composed of two things: assurance (ὑπόστασις) and conviction (ἔλεγχος).

Assurance: "the assurance of things hoped for" (ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις). William Lane (*Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) offers this insight about ὑπόστασις:

> The decisive word ὑπόστασις was used with an extensive range of connotations during the classical and hellenistic periods, and its significance in 11:1 is disputed (for a convenient survey, cf. Grässer, *Glaube*, 46–47, nn. 199–201). A review of the linguistic evidence for the meaning of the term at the time Hebrews was written demonstrates that *ὑπόστασις denoted tangible reality in contrast to mere appearance* (ἔμφασις) (see especially Mathis and Murillo, *Bib* 3 [1922] 79–84; Witt, "ΥΠΟΣΤΑΣΙΣ," 319, 324–25, 330–31; Dörrie, *ZNW* 46 [1955] 196–202; Koester, *TDNT* 8:572–84). The subsequent development of ὑπόστασις in Greek patristic literature, and particularly in the interpretation of Heb 11:1, confirms the obj character of the word (e.g., Chrysostom, *Hom.* 21.2, interprets ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, showing that it is the task of faith to make unseen reality as *real* as that which is seen with the human eye: "faith gives reality [ὑπόστασις] to objects of hope, which seem to be unreal, or rather does not give them reality [ὑπόστασις], but is their very essence [οὐσία]." This is the common patristic interpretation of the expression in Heb 11:1 (Matthis and Murillo, *Bib* 3 [1922] 84).
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> Although it is difficult to convey the range of nuances in ὑπόστασις with a single English word, it is imperative that the objective sense of the term be represented in translation: e.g., "objective guarantee" (Spicq, 2:337-38), "certainty" (Schlatter, 523, 614-17; Grässer, *Glaube,* 64-51; Dautzenberg, *BZ* 17 [1973] 169-70), "title-deed" which legally guarantees future possession (MM 659-60), "reality" (Dörrie, *ZNW* 46 [1955] 202; Koester, *TDNT* 8:586; Thompson, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy,* 70-71), "realization" (Mathis and Murillo, *Bib* 3 [1922] 86-87; Thompson, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy,* 71-72), or "actualization" (Witt, "ΥΠΟΣΤΑΣΙΣ," 330-31). Translations like "confidence" or "assurance" are untenable because they give to ὑπόστασις a subj value that it does not possess (so Dörrie, *ZNW* 46 [1955] 197, n. 5; Dautzenberg, *BZ* 17 [1973] 169; Koester, *TDNT* 8:585-87).

Thus the sense of ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις is much more than what any of the above three translations would suggest. Several translations seek to do a better job of rendering the Greek phrase: "The turning of dreams into deeds" (Cotton Patch Version); "to have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for" (GNB); "the reality of what is hoped for" (HCSB); "the substance of things hoped for" (KJV; NKJV); "the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living" (Message); "being sure of what we hope for" (NET Bible; NIrV; NIV; TNIV); "being sure of the things we hope for" (NCV); "the title deed of things hoped for" (WUESTNT).

When we experience something now it is real in our thinking and understanding. Our senses -- hearing, seeing, touching, etc. -- create the perception of reality. Is there a way for something yet future and not yet experienced to stand equally real in our awareness? If those yet to happen things are the expectation of the second coming of Christ and the end of human history climaxed with our final deliverance from evil and complete acceptance by God into Heaven, then the writer's answer is a resounding "Yes!" We can know in total confidence these things as absolute reality.

How? By faith! Not any old faith though. This is the faith the writer of Hebrews speaks of some 32 times in his use of the noun πίστις., and some two times for the verb ("I believe"). It is surrender to Christ in unconditional commitment to serve Him. Out of that dynamic spiritual relationship comes understanding of the broad contours of the future as mapped out by God, the Creator of Heaven and earth. Thus what we *are* hoping for, *are* expecting to realize (= ἐλπιζομένων) is defined by God. And whatever God has set up is reality with a capital R! And this kind of faith is the avenue into becoming aware of that reality. Our Christian faith penetrates into the as yet unexperienced future and affirms to us the reality that awaits the people of God down the road.

Thus such awareness provides the counter balance to persecution and hardship. Faith enables us to leap frog over these momentary trials to see the broader picture, the reality of eternity with God. As such it fortifies

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[2]See 10:32-34 for the immediate context: "But recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion for those who were in prison, and you cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting."

us against the pressures of present difficulties.

Conviction: "the conviction of things not seen" (πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων). The second phrase stands in grammatical apposition to the first phrase, and thus restates the meaning of the first phrase with a slightly different angle. Again, Lane (WBC) is quite helpful in his comments:

Syntactically, the second clause is in apposition to the first, with the result that ὑπόστασις, "reality," "realization," is strengthened by ἔλεγχος. This shows that ἔλεγχος has an obj rather than a subj sense: "proof," "evidence," "demonstration" (cf. MM 202; Büchsel, *TDNT* 2:476; Grässer, *Glaube,* 50-51, 126-28; Michel, 373).

Thus the English Bible translators have less difficulty bringing this phrase over into English:

NASB: the conviction of things not seen
NRSV: the conviction of things not seen
NLT: the evidence of things we cannot yet see
ASV: a conviction of things not seen
AV: the evidence of things not seen
Cotton Patch: betting yur life on the unseen realities
ESV: the conviction of things not seen
GNB: to be certain of the things we cannot see
HCSB: the proof of what is not seen
ISV: the certainty of things we cannot see
KJV: the evidence of things not seen
Message: our handle on what we can't see
NET: being convinced of what we do not see
NCV: knowing that something is real even if we do not see it

Thus our faith stands as proof of the future realities that God has planned out. In the understanding of faith as the channel into the realities of God's future plans, faith now becomes evidence. Evidence as convincing and as strong as anything our senses affirm to us about present experiences.

The things hoped for are the things not seen. Lane (*WBC*) provides important insights into this:

Corresponding to the normal linguistic usage, ἔλεγχος, "demonstration," "proof," takes an obj gen. πραγμάτων (see the examples given by Riggenbach, 342, n. 70). R. O. P. Taylor (*ExpTim* 52 [1940–41] 256–58) has called attention to the significance of the term πραγμάτων and correctly observes that πράγματα conveys the notion of personal activity or transactions (cf. 4 Macc 1:16: "Wisdom is a knowledge of divine and human *events* and of their causes"; Luke 1:1: "an account of the *events*"; Heb 6:18: "by two irrevocable *events* in which it is impossible for God to lie"; Eusebius, *Church History* 1.1: "to recount how many and important *events* are to have occurred"). For the translation of πράγματα as "events," see Maurer, *TDNT* 6:639; Williamson, *Philo,* 354, 359, 368.

Paul's understanding of this is reflected in 1 Cor. 2:9-10 (NRSV).

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

God has a glorious future in store for His children. He has it mapped out and ready to implement at the appropriate time. Our Christian faith has given us access to that future, and so it stands as concrete reality, as real as anything that has ever happened in the past or is happening now in our lives. Thus faith as conviction strengthens us against hardship and trials. Through faith we endure faithful to our God.

How important is such faith? With the causal declaration in verse 2, the writer affirms the critical role that faith has played among those who preceded his day: "Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval" (ἐν ταύτῃ γὰρ ἐμαρτυρήθησαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι). Lane (WBC) correctly points out the transitional function of verse 2 and thus its central role in the passage:

As the immediate substantiation of v 1 and the transition to the recital of the exponents of faith in vv 4–38, v 2 is of fundamental importance. It establishes that the thesis expressed in v 1 and the examples of faith enumerated in the catalogue will be mutually verified (cf. Schlatter, 526–27). The explanatory statement that "the men of the past" (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ; cf. Ps 104[MT 105]:22 LXX) received attestation from God ἐν ταύτῃ, "on this account," clearly means within the scope of faith presupposed in v 1. Their decisions and actions reflected a stance of life that is the hallmark of faith and demonstrated the capacity of faith to sustain steadfast commitment to God.

By their faith, the ancestors whom the writer is now going to describe, received acceptance with God. Paul Ellington (*New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Logos Systems) observes about ἐμαρτυρήθησαν:

Ἐμαρτυρήθησαν: ==> 7:8. The implied object is ultimately God, as explicitly in v. 4, but the witness of God is indistinguishable in Hebrews from the witness of scripture (==> 10:15). *1 Clem.* 17:1ff.; 18:1; 19:1; 30:7 continues this usage, for which Rom. 3:21 is the closest NT parallel; in Acts (e.g., 6:3; cf. also 3 Jn. 12), μαρτύρουμαι is used of human testimony; in 1 Tim. 5:10, of the witness of good works. Μαρτύρουμαι always implies favourable testimony, as explicitly in v. 4. Apart from Gn. 15:6, to which Heb. 11:12 merely alludes, there are in fact few if any OT texts,

The sense of approval is that God accepted the testimony presented by their faith.

What is the connection of all this to us? Very clear! Faith should take on new meaning. We can see it as as source of strength for facing life. But it is faith as defined by the writer of Hebrews as surrender to Jesus. Not faith as blind optimism for the future that everything is going to work out. Our senses define reality to us most of the time. But for the genuine Christian, faith in Christ defines the eternal realities ever more strongly and reliably than hearing, touching, feeling etc. Out of this kind of faith comes endurance that withstands all the trials put upon us.

II. Faith: lived out, vv. 3-7

3 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.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and "he was not found, because God had taken him." For it was attested before he was taken away that "he had pleased God." 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. 7 By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

11.3 Πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι.

11.4 Πίστει πλείονα θυσίαν Ἄβελ παρὰ Κάϊν προσήνεγκεν τῷ θεῷ, δι᾽ ἧς ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος, μαρτυροῦντος ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ δι᾽ αὐτῆς ἀποθανὼν ἔτι λαλεῖ. 11.5 Πίστει Ἑνὼχ μετετέθη τοῦ μὴ ἰδεῖν θάνατον, καὶ οὐχ ηὑρίσκετο διότι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός. πρὸ γὰρ τῆς μεταθέσεως μεμαρτύρηται εὐαρεστηκέναι τῷ θεῷ· 11.6 χωρὶς δὲ πίστεως ἀδύνατον εὐαρεστῆσαι· πιστεῦσαι γὰρ δεῖ τὸν προσερχόμενον τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἔστιν καὶ τοῖς ἐκζητοῦσιν αὐτὸν μισθαποδότης γίνεται. 11.7 Πίστει χρηματισθεὶς Νῶε περὶ τῶν μηδέπω βλεπομένων, εὐλαβηθεὶς κατεσκεύασεν κιβωτὸν εἰς σωτηρίαν τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ δι᾽ ἧς κατέκρινεν τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τῆς κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνης ἐγένετο κληρονόμος.

With verse three there begins a series of topic headers in vv. 3, 4, 5, & 7: Πίστει (By faith...).[3] These both create unity of thought and introduce new topics. The twofold nature of these four headers is reflected in first 'we understand creation" v. 3, and then three individuals reflecting faith in Genesis 1-11. So Genesis 1-2 is affirmed in the first one, and Genesis 3-11 in the second set.

Fred Craddock (*New Interpreter's Bible*, iPreach) calls attention to the role of the first person verb form in verses 3 and 39-40:

By beginning with his own and the reader's Christian witness, the writer begins the narrative as it ends, in the first person (vv. 39-40). This is to say, the roll call of the faithful springs from the earlier word, we are "among those who have faith" (10:39 NRSV), and moves toward the conviction that "they would not, apart from us, be made perfect" (11:40).

Creation: "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" (Πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι). Important here is the flow from faith to understanding. Faith informs the mind about the creation of the world. The creation actions of God came through the "word of God" (ῥήματι θεοῦ). The phraseology of the Greek clearly alludes to the "and God said..." pattern in the creation narratives of Genesis one and two. It has no connection to scripture as the 'word of God,' usually written as ὁ λογὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. This creation action of God resulted in the existence of the visible, but not from something as its source. God speaking was all that was necessary for the world to come into existence.

Some basic theological debates have grown out of this statement, as Craddock (NIB) describes:

As to the particular point at which our faith is demonstrated, the narrative itself, following the order of the OT, dictates that it concern creation. The perspective on creation is based on one of the definitions of "faith" in v. 1: "faith is the proof of what is not seen." This faith enables the understanding that the creation, which is seen, was made from what is unseen—that is, the Word of God. The NIV's "what is seen was not made out of what was visible" is preferred over the NRSV's "what is seen was made from things that are not visible." Although both renderings are possible, the NIV opens the door to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo,* which entered Hellenistic Judaism (Wisd. 11:17; Philo *Life of Moses* II.267); the NRSV suggests that God made the world from some invisible material.

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[3] "Throughout vv 3–31 the word πίστει, 'by faith,' is drawn forward and placed at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis. The simple dative πίστει effectively connotes the decisiveness of the faith by which faithful men and women are to live and act." ---William Lane (WBC)

This difference has been much debated among Christians. Plato's theory of visible and invisible worlds lies back of that debate and may lie in the background of this statement in Hebrews, but the writer's point does not come within that argument. The assertion here is that the visible came from the invisible, and the invisible is the Word of God. This is the writer's point; whether God worked with invisible "stuff" is not at issue here. That the Word of God brought into being the universe is a tenet of faith, which is proof of the unseen.

The significant assertion here is that affirming that the visible world was created by nothing more than God speaking is indeed an affirmation of faith. The faith described in vv. 1-2 enables the believer to penetrate into this primeval past and grasp the reality that our world owes its existence totally to God.

Why is this important? In the history of religions comparative studies of various religious traditions, one can clearly see that how the religious person views the origins of his world profoundly shapes his understanding of life and how to live it. For Jews and Christians, God created the world and us. Therefore we stand forever obligated to Him and accountable to Him. People without this faith are blind to this reality, but not exempt from being held in strict accountability (cf. Rom. 2:1). Consequently they live their lives in impoverished ignorance as they move ever toward eternal judgment and damnation. But by faith Christians have access to this reality of divine creation and it shapes their lives and living as stewards of God's creation.

No reason is given by the writer of Hebrews for the selection of these three individuals who are listed next. Certainly from Genesis 1-11 other individuals could have been chosen just as easily. Also, his interpretation of the details of these individuals goes way beyond the details of the original description in Genesis. Unclear is whether he is reflecting current Jewish and/or early Christian interpretive understanding, or just simply his own view of these individuals. Craddock (*NIB*) offers some insight here:

Verses 4-7 begin the roll call with the names of three ancestors who lived "by faith": Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Again, it must be remembered that the reading of these vignettes from the OT as actions "by faith" is the author's own, whether faith is present implicitly or explicitly in the ancient account. Similarly, to what extent the Hebrews writer is commenting on the biblical text alone or is influenced by Jewish and Christian traditions about the biblical accounts is not always clear.

Abel: "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks" (Πίστει πλείονα θυσίαν Ἄβελ παρὰ Κάϊν προσήνεγκεν τῷ θεῷ, δι᾽ ἧς ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος, μαρτυροῦντος ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ δι᾽ αὐτῆς ἀποθανὼν ἔτι λαλεῖ). Abel was the first son of Adam and Eve and was murdered by his brother Cain as described in Genesis 4:1-8.[4] The key verses are 4-5: "and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard." This is the extent of the story of Abel in the scripture text. Lane (*WBC*) traces the history of Jewish understanding of this event, which probably laid the foundation for the writer of Hebrews to draw from:

The lack of detail in the biblical account invited elaboration in the subsequent Jewish tradition (see especially Aptowitzer, *Kain und Abel*, 37–55, who arranges the primary sources in terms of traditions concerning the condition of Cain's offering [37–41], the acceptance of Abel's offering [41–43], the death and burial of Abel [43–55]). Two concerns of the later tradition are relevant to the representation of the matter in v 4: (1) Why should God have shown regard for Abel's offering, while rejecting Cain's sacrifice? (2) How did the two brothers know that God had accepted Abel's sacrifice, but not Cain's?

The Jewish tradition tended to approach the first question by concentrating on the rejection of Cain's sacrifice (cf. Aptowitzer, *Kain und Abel*, 37–41). There was a deficiency of a ritual character in the presentation of the sacrifice (so Gen 4:7 LXX, "if you had offered it correctly [ὀρθῶς], but you did not divide it correctly," with the implication that Abel had, in fact, cut up the pieces of his sacrifice in a ritually correct manner), or in the quality of the offering (e.g., Philo, *On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* 88: "But Abel brought different offerings, and in a different manner. His offering was living, Cain's was lifeless. His was first in age and quality, Cain's was second"; *On the Confusion of Tongues* 124: "Cain retained in his own possession the firstfruits of his farming and offered, as we are told, merely the harvest of a later time, although he had beside him a wholesome example," while Abel "brought to the altar the firstborn, not the later-born"). Other lines of the tradition concentrated on piety as the determining factor for the acceptance or rejection of the offerings. Cain's moral disposition was deficient (e.g., Jos., *Ant.* 1.61: Cain was depraved and his

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[4] 1 Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced F15 a man with the help of the Lord." 2 Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground.

3 In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

6 The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

8 Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him.

only motive was profit; cf. [5]*Apoc. Mos.* 1:3; 2:2; 3:1–3; 40:3; 43:1, cited by le Déaut, *Bib* 42 [1961] 31) and his works were evil (1 John 3:12; Jos., *Ant.*, 1.53: "Abel was attentive to righteousness ... but Cain was de praved")....

The reference to Abel in v 4 shows little interest in the traditional elaboration of the biblical narrative. Taking the Scriptural account at its face value, the writer simply notes the acceptable quality of Abel's offering, using πλείονα in its qualitative sense ("more acceptable"; see above, *Note* m[*]), without commenting on the basis for the acceptance of the sacrifice. The general tenor of Scripture indicates that the superior quality of Abel's offering derived from the integrity of his heart rather than from the nature of the offering itself. This is the clear implication of Gen 4:7, where t he Lord says to Cain, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?" For the writer of Hebrews, the fact that Abel offered his sacrifice πίστει, "by faith," is sufficient explanation for the acceptance of his offering by God. His act of worship entailed the thoughtful exposure of his self to the living and holy God.

By so offering his sacrifice to God Abel found God's approval. Thus he becomes an example of faith commitment to subsequent generations.

Enoch: "By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and "he was not found, because God had taken him. For it was attested before he was taken away that 'he had pleased God.' And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Πίστει Ἐνὼχ μετετέθη τοῦ μὴ ἰδεῖν θάνατον, καὶ οὐχ ηὑρίσκετο διότι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός . πρὸ γὰρ τῆς μεταθέσεως μεμαρτύρηται εὐαρεστηκέναι τῷ θεῷ· χωρὶς δὲ πίστεως ἀδύνατον εὐαρεστῆσαι· πιστεῦσαι γὰρ δεῖ τὸν προσερχόμενον τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἔστιν καὶ τοῖς ἐκζητοῦσιν αὐτὸν μισθαποδότης γίνεται.). Enoch descends from Adam and Eve in the sixth generation: Adam==>Seth==>Enosh==>Kenan==>Mahalalel==> Jared==>Enoch. His story is contained in Gen. 5:21-24.[6] From the Genesis statement "Enoch walked with God" comes the assessment "by faith..." Lane (WBC) provides a summation of the Jewish interpretive history which sets in important backdrop to the view of the writer of Hebrews:

The biblical record of Adam's line in Gen 5:1–31 consists of brief vignettes, each of which concludes with the notice of the death of the individual singled out for special mention. The phrase "and he died" (καὶ ἀπέθανεν) is repeated as the final word on the antediluvian fathers throughout the genealogy (Gen 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31 LXX). The only relief in this relentless chorus occurs in the account of Enoch, who "pleased God" (Gen 5:22, 24 LXX), and as a result did not experience death because God "took him away" (μετέθηκεν, Gen 5:24 LXX). As a singular individual who escaped death through translation, Enoch would inevitably become a figure around whom Jewish lore would cluster (cf. Sir 49:14: "No one like Enoch has been created on earth, for he was taken up from the earth").

The formulation of v 5 is indebted to the LXX, which exhibits a tendency to avoid anthropomorphisms. The statement in the MT that Enoch "walked with God" (Gen 5:22, 24) was translated in the LXX as "Enoch pleased God" (εὐηρέστησεν Ἐνὼχ τῷ θεῷ), and this is the basis for the wording of v 5 as well as of other references to Enoch in the hellenistic-Jewish tradition (e.g., Sir 44:16*a*; Wis 4:10, 14).

The writer grounds Enoch's experience of translation in faith ("by faith Enoch was translated"), and clarifies the meaning of μετετέθη, "he was translated," by the articular infinitive clause τοῦ μὴ ἰδεῖν θάνατον, "that he should not see death." The phrase "to see death," like the related expression "to taste death" (2:9), is a Semitism for the experience of death. The traditional character of this explanation is apparent from statements roughly contemporaneous with Hebrews (e.g., &1Clem; 9:3, "Let us take Enoch, who having been found righteous in obedience was translated, and death did not happen to him"). The statement that Enoch was translated by God is supported in v 5*b* by the citation of a portion of Gen 5:24 LXX, in the wording of Codex Alexandrinus (which uses the causal conjunction διότι rather than ὅτι, both meaning "because"). The primary point of interest for the writer, however, is the witness of Scripture that Enoch received divine approval as a man who pleased God prior to his experience of translation (v 5*c*). The attestation of Gen 5:22 LXX is repeated in Gen 5:24 LXX immediately prior to the statement that God removed Enoch from the earth. The assertion that Enoch "pleased God" provides the point of transition to the important statement about faith in v 6.

Enoch is never portrayed as an exemplar of faith in Jewish tradition. Elsewhere in hellenistic-Jewish literature he is cited as a model of repentance. For example, the brief reference to Enoch in Sir 44:16 condenses Gen 5:22–24 LXX ("Enoch pleased the Lord and was translated") and continues by asserting that "he was an example of repentance to all generations." This deduction appears to be based on the literary structure of Gen 5:21–24, where a distinction is made between the period prior to the birth of Enoch's son (v 21) and the subsequent period during which he "pleased God" (vv 22–24). The basis of the tradition is the presupposition that repentance marked Enoch's conversion to the true God, and that explains why he "pleased the Lord" (cf. Lührmann, *ZNW* 66 [1975] 106–10).

The way God accepted him by enabling him to avoid death signals Enoch's faith and its genuineness.

[5]*Apoc. Mos. Apocalypse of Moses*

[6]21 When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. 22 Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. 23 Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years. 24 Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.

An explanatory justification (γὰρ) for this interpretive view of Enoch is presented in verse 6: "for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (πιστεῦσαι γὰρ δεῖ τὸν προσερχόμενον τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἔστιν καὶ τοῖς ἐκζητοῦσιν αὐτὸν μισθαποδότης γίνεται.). The tone of Hellenistic Judaism reflected in this statement is amplified by Lane (*WBC*):

> The life that pleases God begins with the certain recognition of God and his character. This is stated explicitly in the explanatory clause that follows immediately, which clarifies two rudimentary dimensions of πίστις, "faith." The only presupposition for approaching God is the certainty that he exists and that he establishes a relationship with those who earnestly seek him.
>
> The emphasis on believing in God's existence in v 6 is unique in the NT but is anticipated in 6:1. There, the rudimentary tenet of πίστις ἐπὶ θεόν, "faith towards God," was cited as a foundational element in the catechetical instruction to which the congregation had been exposed when they became Christians (see *Comment* on 6:1; cf. Dautzenberg, *BZ* 17 [1973] 165–66). The expression πιστεῦσαι ... ὅτι ἔστιν, "to believe that he [God] exists," is creedal in formulation and reflects missionary terminology developed in the hellenistic-Jewish synagogues.

Enoch thus becomes a model of faith by the way his lived his life and by the way God acknowledged this through enabling him to avoid death.

Noah: "By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith" (Πίστει χρηματισθεὶς Νῶε περὶ τῶν μηδέπω βλεπομένων, εὐλαβηθεὶς κατεσκεύασεν κιβωτὸν εἰς σωτηρίαν τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ δι᾽ ἧς κατέκρινεν τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τῆς κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνης ἐγένετο κληρονόμος). Probably the most family of these four individuals, Noah stands toward the end of the primeval history of Gen. 1-11 with his story in chapters 6-10. Ellingsworth (NIGTC) observes:

> The story of Noah in Gn. 6–9 says nothing of Noah's faith; but it does state that Noah pleased God (6:9), so the author could have applied, and perhaps implicitly does apply, to Noah the argument just used in the case of Enoch. *1 Clem.* 9:4, possibly dependent at this point on Hebrews, describes Noah as πιστός; *Sib. Or.* 1.125f. typically states:
>
> > Noah alone among all was most upright and true,
> > a most trustworthy man, concerned for noble deeds.
>
> Elsewhere in the NT, Noah* is mentioned in a genealogy, Lk. 3:36; in a time reference, Mt. 24:37f.‖Lk. 17:26f., with more substantial references in 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5, which may share common tradition. 1 Pet. 3:20 and Hebrews share only the minimal statements (1) that Noah built an ark, and (2) that the result of his action was to "save" himself and others. 2 Pet. 2:5 repeats (2) and stands in a strong tradition which saw Noah as preaching righteousness: either to his sons and grandsons (*Jub.* 7:20–33) or to the nations (*Sib. Or.* 1.147–198; cf. *1 Clem.* 7:6; 9:4). According to *2 Enoch* 71:12–23, Noah was the uncle of Melchizedek, but there is nothing to suggest that the author of Hebrews knew of this tradition, or found it significant. For Noah as a righteous man, see on δικαιοσύνη below.

That Noah lived a life of faith by the writer of Hebrew's definition is most easy to see. Does this mean that he was perfect? Not at all, for the story of Noah in Genesis 6-10 contains somes dark moments as well as rays of bright sunshine. But when God told him to build the ark, he set about doing it just as he was instructed. By this action of faithful obedience he became a judgment against his unbelieving neighbors who ridiculed him for building this big boat.

CONCLUSION

What connection does this have to us today? From both the depiction of faith in the beginning and especially from the examples of faith we should be able to gain tremendously greater insight in the heart of what it means to believe in God through Christ. Faith is the spiritual reality that enables us to penetrate into the future plans of God. But it also enables a backward glance into our origins in divine creation. This insight shapes and molds our life and living in the present. From the three individuals and their faith journey we learn that proper offering to God comes out of faith. Faith means walking with God through life and thus pleasing Him. The particular blessing given to Enoch of avoiding death will only be ours if Jesus returns before death comes. But the principle of divine blessing based upon the faith commitment of a person such as Enoch remains unchanged. God blesses those who are faithful to him. Noah's courageous commitment to obey God in the face of ridicule shows us how faith fortifies us for persecution and opposition.

May God help us all to live by faith and to realize the full potency of faith in that living!