

# Faith Is Assurance

Bible Background • Hebrews 11:1–7; Psalm 46:1–11

Printed Text • Hebrews 11:1–3, 6; Psalm 46:1–3, 8–11 | Devotional Reading • Psalm 27:1–6

## Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: KNOW the meaning of faith and its implication for our lives; FEEL God's constant presence; and DEVELOP a practice of relying on God for positive change.

## In Focus

The students knew today's lecture was going to be about the terrorists' attacks on September 11, 2001, but they wondered why it was going to be discussed in their African American Studies class.

Professor Williams started the class by asking the students what they thought of the movie she assigned, "The World Trade Center." Several students shared their critiques of the movie. When she asked what was missing, the room was silent.

Then a student asked, "Were the Black people on the board behind you also directly affected by the attacks?" "Yes, Deshawn," Professor Williams said. "Not only were the stories of African Americans left out of the news coverage at that time but the real-life account of Jason Thomas, a former U.S. Marine who helped to rescue New York Port Authority police officers from out of the rubble, was cast as a white man in the movie. It's as if anyone Black was scrubbed from this event."

She told the students that over 260 African Americans died in New York; Washington DC; and Shanksville, PA on that day.

Professor Williams continued, "These stories aren't just important for their families, and the nation at large, but for us as African Americans. Mr. Thomas had the faith and commitment to do the work he was called to do, even though it could have cost him his life."

*In today's lesson, we learn that when we experience conflicts in life, we can trust God by faith to see us through.*

## Keep In Mind

"Now Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (HEBREWS 11:1, KJV)

## Words You Should Know

**A. Faith** (Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6) *pistis* (Gk.)— Belief with the predominant idea of trust (or confidence); assurance.

**B. Refuge** (Psalm 46:1) *machaceh* (Heb.)—A shelter from rain, storm, or danger; hope.

## Say It Correctly

**Abel.** AY-buhl

**Cain.** KAYN

## KJV

**Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

**Psalms 46:1** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

## NLT

**Hebrews 11:1** Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.

2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

3 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.

6 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.

**Psalms 46:1** God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.

2 So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.

3 Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!

8 Come, see the glorious works of the Lord: See how he brings destruction upon the world.

9 He causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

10 "Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world."

11 The Lord of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Sons of Korah.** Psalms 42 through 49 were written by the sons of Korah, who were temple musicians and assistants. The Korahites were among the chief Levitical families; they were listed as "gatekeepers." Korah was a Levite who led a rebellion against Moses. Although Korah was killed, his family remained faithful to God and continued to serve in His temple. King David appointed men from the clan of Korah to serve as choir leaders. Later, the choir leaders continued to serve as temple musicians for hundreds of years.

**Psalms.** The book of Psalms is a series of five collections: Book 1 (Psalms 1–41), Book II (Psalms 42–72), Book III (Psalms 73–89), Book IV (Psalms 90–106) and Book V (Psalms 107–150). Several authors wrote the collections, and some are anonymous. David wrote at least 73 psalms, and Asaph, sons of Korah, Moses, Solomon, Ethan, and Heman wrote others. Psalms was written over a period of more than 1,000 years, which included the time of Moses (around 1440 B.C.) to the time of captivity

in Babylon (around 586 B.C). The majority of the books were written during Israel's wilderness experience and time in Israel, Judah, or Babylon. The title "Psalms" was first used in the Septuagint. The traditional Hebrew title is *tehillim*, which means "praises" but most of the psalms are *tephillot*, which means "prayers."

## Background

The readers of the book of Hebrews knew Scripture and professed faith in Christ. Because of doubt, persecution, or false teaching, the believers, who were Jewish Christians, considered giving up Christianity and returning to Judaism. The writer emphasized the superiority of faith to encourage the Christians of the first century to stand by faith.

Christians were demoralized and discouraged because centuries of tradition were replaced with spiritual freedom based upon faith in Christ. As a result, the believers experienced the wrath of the Jewish religious establishment because they believed in God's greatest promise—Jesus Christ—the Messiah, who fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. The writer wanted to prevent believers from rejecting Christianity and returning to Judaism. The writer explained the superiority of faith by examples of people who demonstrated greater faith. The heroes of faith were intended to encourage the power of faith as the believers adhered to their profession of true religion.

Through examples in biblical history, faith is revealed through assurance in God's future promises with the implications that inspire believers to persevere. Through the summary of Jewish history, the heroes of faith challenge believers to grow in faith and live in obedience to God. Psalm 46, which was written by the sons of Korah—who were temple assistants—was a celebration of God's deliverance. The psalm may have been written when the Assyrian army invaded the land and surrounded Jerusalem. As the psalm speaks to ancient Israelites, it speaks to believers today. We need not fear if we trust God. Through faith we can give thanks for God's constant presence in our lives. Because God is with us, we can be rescued. The writer refers to a "river" (Psalm 46:4), which is the tunnel that King Hezekiah built to guarantee a continuous water supply for Jerusalem during times of war. Like the tunnel, God's presence is constant for believers.

### At-A-Glance

1. Faith Is Confidence and Certainty (Hebrews 11:1–3)
2. Faith Is Necessary (v. 6)
3. Faith Is Trust in God as Our Refuge (Psalm 46:1–3)
4. Faith Is Trust in God Whose Presence Is Constant (vv. 8–11)

## In Depth

### 1. Faith Is Confidence and Certainty (Hebrews 11:1–3)

The writer of Hebrews begins chapter 11 with a description of faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). The reality of faith is what is "hoped for." Our prayers and hopes are based upon the promises of God. With a firm persuasion and expectation, the writer encouraged the believers to trust that God will perform what He has promised through Christ. We cannot see the future, nor do we know what will happen tomorrow, but our confidence is based upon the certainty of God's trustworthiness. To encourage struggling believers to hold to the superiority of their faith in Christ, the writer refers the believers to the elders of the Old Testament

(Hebrews 11:2). The “elders” received a “good report,” which was the evidence that they would receive the promise of participating in God’s kingdom when it arrives in its fullness. Their actions revealed a genuine faith that will bring honor to the ancient believers.

Many Jewish teachers believed the material universe was created based on God’s invisible pattern exemplified in His Word or wisdom. By faith, we believe God created everything out of nothing. Moses detailed the story of creation in Genesis chapter 1; there was a majestic display of power and purpose. With each creation, God “saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21). By faith, we believe God spoke and created the entire universe. Our faith is based upon who God is; our response should be a confident and certain hope in God because He is ever present. Do you have certain and confident faith in God?

## **2. Faith Is Necessary (v. 6)**

Faith reveals the reality of God. “It is impossible to please God” without faith because faith is necessary to have an active relationship with God; it is necessary to walk with God (Hebrews 11:6, NLT). By faith, we believe in God and trust with certainty the future promises that He has revealed.

The heroes of faith believed and obeyed regardless of the consequences. In the same way, we can believe with a willing trust and please God. Our steadfast confidence is based upon who God is—the creator of the universe. God will recognize and reward our faith because we “diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). By faith, we realize our own insufficiency and depend on God to work within us and through us. By faith we have confidence in the continual promises of God.

## **3. Faith Is Trust in God as Our Refuge (Psalm 46:1–3)**

The sons of Korah were temple assistants who wrote Psalm 46. The psalmists recognized God as their source of help; they realized God’s complete power and ability to rescue His children. As believers, we do not need to fear because God’s presence is constant. God is our refuge; therefore, we can flee to Him and find security.

Life presents temporary destruction, doubts, and uncertainty, but God’s presence is constant; “therefore will not we fear” (Psalm 46:2). We can appreciate God’s constant presence because He is our mighty fortress. The earth swallowed up Korah, but the psalmists did not fear. We can be fearless with God as our present help, too. God is not a temporary resource; instead, God is our eternal refuge. The psalmists remind believers, “Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake,” God’s power is complete and victory in Him is certain (Psalm 46:3). We should not be troubled when the earth is unstable because our confidence is not found in the earth. Our confidence is based upon God, our sound eternal footing.

## **4. Faith Is Trust in God Whose Presence Is Constant (vv. 8–11)**

The psalmist urges the believers to “behold the works of the LORD” (Psalm 46:8). Recognize the presence of God and His ability to save His children. He is the creator who cares for nature and all living things. As believers, we can trust in God’s strength and His constant presence. Those who oppose God will experience desolation and face His judgment. But believers can stand in awe of God’s power.

The psalmist encourages believers to respond with a generous heart. We can, as the psalm states, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Even though war, destruction, and famine are a part

of the world, God is still in charge. He is sovereign. Final victory belongs to Him, and He will be exalted. Therefore, we can rest assured and know with comfort that He is Lord.

### **Search the Scriptures**

1. How did the writer of Hebrews describe faith (Hebrews 11:1)?
2. Who received a “good report” (Hebrews 11:2)?
3. Why is faith necessary to “understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Hebrews 11:3)?

### **Discuss the Meaning**

1. The writer explains that faith is required to understand that God created the universe where nothing existed. Genesis 1 details the awesome creation of the universe that was formed by God’s Word. Faith is the beginning of our relationship with God. What qualities of faith are necessary to continue to grow and strengthen our relationship with God?
2. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram led 250 princes against the priesthood of Aaron and Moses’ general authority, God punished the leaders by allowing their challengers to be swallowed up by the earth. A fire consumed 250 of them. The psalmists, the sons of Korah, reiterate God’s presence and encourage readers not to fear. How can we maintain a quiet confidence in the midst of economic turmoil, natural disasters, and continual wars?

### **Liberating Lesson**

If we watch the news, listen to the radio or interact with others on social media, we hear about the current state of the world. The pandemic has devastated communities in different ways. Many people are homeless, unemployed, or on the verge of both. Natural disasters occur, and the number of fatalities grows. War and destruction are continually reported by the news. Peace seems impossible. While positive change seems nonexistent, we must not lose hope. God is ever-present. If we trust God, we will be rescued, and change will occur through God’s strength. We can rely on God for positive change as we realize our faith will be tested. How has your faith in God become stronger or weaker in light of world events, catastrophes, and unrest? How much do you think the world dismisses the constant help of God as a result of abundant negativity, catastrophe, and unrest?

### **Application for Activation**

To remain faithful with steadfast confidence and certainty, we must keep our eyes on God through continual prayer. We must remain hopeful for positive change, as we believe that God is in control. We can have faith in God’s constant presence even today because we know He is our refuge in times of trouble. Make a commitment to regularly attend Bible study and Sunday school to increase your awareness of God’s power in troubling times. Join ministries that actively build the community and encourage people who are suffering or do not know God. Allow God’s presence to be evident through your actions and words.

### **Follow the Spirit**

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## More Light on the Text

Hebrews 11:1–3, 6; Psalm 46:1–3, 8–11

### 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith, the author of Hebrews tells us, is the substance of things hoped for. The Greek word *hupostasis* (hoop-OS-tas-is) translated “substance” (KJV), has previously been used with the same meaning in 1:3. In other contexts, it may be regarded as “confidence,” a subjective meaning, as in 3:14. The translation “substance” is preferred here. Understood this way, it means that faith authenticates the things believers hope for as though things already exist. Faith lays hold of invisible realities. The word “evidence” (Gk. *elegchos*, EL-eng-khos) usually signifies a proof or test. Faith is the evidence or proof for things unseen. It then acts on those unseen things as if they are visible or easily identified by the senses.

### 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Verse 2 goes further to explain how faith is the “substance” or “proof” because of “the elders” (Gk. *presbuteros*, pres-BOO-ter-os), a term that may be used of age or dignity. These men had witnesses borne to them (Gk. *epimartureo*, ep-ee-mar-too-REH-o) or were held up as good examples on account of their faith. In agreement with the author’s usage of “bearing witness or testifying” in 2:4; 7:8, 17; 10:15, and elsewhere, it is clear that God is the one who bore witness to or gave affirmation to the faith of the elders.

### 3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

“Through faith” runs through the chapter with compelling emphasis. For the most part, it is attached to the accomplishments of the great ones of previous generations. Here, however, the writer speaks not only of the ancients or elders but also of “we” in the present, claiming a close tie between the author and the audience. Faith is a present reality, not exclusively the property of past heroes. Faith gives us convictions about creation. For the author, the visible universe is not sufficient to account for itself. But it is faith, not something material, that assures the author that the universe originated with God. The author’s view is nonetheless certain because it is based on faith, and the author does not qualify this statement as though any doubt were possible. This world is God’s world, and faith assures the author that God created it. Faith’s understanding that the universe is framed or fashioned by the Word of God changes the human perception of all things: “So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Without a doubt, this is the most indispensable of all insights, the one that distinguishes believers from the unbelievers. The world is not self-derived, self-contained, nor self-sufficient.

**11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**

In this verse, the author draws out the implication of Abel and Enoch's examples (Hebrews 11:4–5) with a general proposition concerning faith itself. He moves directly to faith as an appropriate way of responding to God. Though the Old Testament does not say that Enoch had faith, the author goes on to explain the reason for the use of this word in this context. It is impossible to please God without faith, and Enoch pleased God. Thus, it is clear that he had faith. The author issues a flat denial that anyone can please God apart from faith. The author does not simply say that without faith it is difficult to please God; but that without faith, it is impossible to please Him! There is no substitute for faith. Whoever approaches God must first believe that He exists. This is basic. Without it, there is no possibility of faith at all. But it is not enough. There must also be a conviction "that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (11:6, NIV). Only if God is all-powerful Creator can He reward those who seek Him. As Barclay puts it, "We must believe not only that God exists but also that he cares" (Barclay, 139). Without that deep conviction, faith in the biblical sense is not a possibility.

**46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**

**2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;**

**3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.**

Psalm 46 has been popularized by Martin Luther's rendition in the hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." It is said that he wrote it at that moment in 1529 when the Turkish army retreated to the Balkans after besieging the walls of Vienna in vain. The psalm is an expression of confidence in God. It begins with a confession of faith and presents God in a very personal way to Israel. The "times of trouble," in which God offers protection, are times when chaos replaces order, both in the natural world and in the world of nations and human affairs (46:1, NLT). The affirmation of God's presence in a protective capacity is the basis for the confidence in the community's words: "We will not fear," (v. 3, NIV). This great God is "ever-present" with His people. His presence in protecting the people of God is described by three words: "refuge," "strength," and "fortress." These words designate the source and effectiveness of Israel's strength. God is their strength (see Psalm 29:11; 68:35; 71:7; Isaiah 26:1). As their strength, He is like a refuge where one finds rest and asylum (see Psalm 14:6; 61:3; 62:7–8; 71:7; Isaiah 25:4; Jeremiah 17:17). His strength is also evident when they find protection in Him as a fortress. The fortress was an isolated, elevated place where people built a stronghold against the enemy (see Psalm 9:9; 18:2; 48:3; Isaiah 33:16). Each of these descriptions relates to a people in need. Only when they are in distress do they need His special protection (see Psalm 22:19; 27:9; 40:13). They always need Him, but they experience the power of His presence particularly in periods of anguish and distress (see 23:4). Then He is close to them— "very present" (46:1; see Deuteronomy 4:7). God had always been their strength—including when Moses led them out of the clutches of Pharaoh in Egypt. Consequently, He could now be trusted to remain even if the mountains below the ocean were to quake, consequently causing a flood. For God is Immanuel, meaning, "God is with us." Thus, if God is not moved, then, because our refuge is in Him, we shall not be moved either.

**46:8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.**

**9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.**

The psalmist exhorts the godly to be wise and discerning by considering the works of God. The announcement is applicable to almost any occasion when the people of God were delivered from a pressing peril. For Israel, the "works of God" include all acts of God in the history of salvation: Exodus, conquest, the period of the judges, and the monarchy (see Psalm 66:5–7). Reciting the mighty acts of God plants evidence of His care, protection, and providential rule deep in the memory of God's

people. Those who are wise enough to remember and see the world around them have tokens of God's presence with God's people. The deliverance of Israel from its threat occurs by "desolations," which God accomplishes among the nations (46:8). But there is another side to the story. Every victory, every subjugation of a hostile nation, and every stroke on the canvas of the history of redemption clarifies that the Lord's very plan for humanity includes cessation of wars for an era of peace. His judgments of the nations will result in removal of evil instigators, troublemakers, rebels, and expressions of hostility in every form. The God of peace will make "wars cease" (46:9; see Isaiah 2:4; Ezekiel 39:9; Micah 4:3; Zechariah 9:10). The instruments of warfare described in Psalm 46:9, symbolized by the bow, the spear, and the chariot, will become inoperative (see Isaiah 9:4; Ezekiel 39:9–10; Hosea 2:18; Micah 4:1–4). Yet, to do so, in the end, God must surely cause great convulsions—for evil is a serious power to be reckoned with. Consequently, He breaks the bow, shatters the spear, and burns the chariot in the fire.

**46:10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.**

**11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.**

Verse 10 begins with a common invitation in Christian spirituality. In its context, as John Goldingay rightly observes, the verse "issues an important challenge to the superpower to stand still and recognize that God is God and that the superpower is not" (Goldingay, 73). Israel, like the nations, must stop looking after its own destiny and acknowledge that God is God—therefore God is its refuge and strength. Yet, the verse speaks to us to learn to cultivate the habit of silence. Second, the psalmist encourages the godly to "know" that the Lord is God. Though it was tempting to ally themselves with foreign powers, to rely on military strength, or to give themselves over to idolatry and pagan ways, the godly had to learn to persevere to the end by trusting in God. Throughout the history of Israel and Judah, severe national distress brought the temptation to abandon true religion for the short-lived security of political alliances, military strength, and worldly paganism. Instead of choosing a negative option, the people of God distinguished themselves by their pursuit for godliness: "Know that I am God." The knowledge of God includes a factual understanding about Him, His past acts, and His promises. But in this context, the psalmist calls on the Israelites to commit themselves to the Lord and to seek His "refuge," "strength," and "fortress" (vv. 1, 7, 11). Peter Craigie sums up verse 11 this way: "Both the 'nations' and the 'earth' (v. 11), which earlier were depicted as posing a threat to orderly existence, are now harnessed in service to the exaltation of God. Hence, the people may 'relax' in appropriate confidence (v. 11a); to know that God is God is to know His Lordship of nature and history, and therefore to be aware of His total capacity as Protector" (Craigie, 345). The God of our ancestors is still the God we have today, still our refuge, our fortress!

# Daily Bible Readings

## **MONDAY**

The Trusting Child  
(Mark 10:13-16)

## **TUESDAY**

The Trust of the Weak  
(2 Chronicles 14:2-12)

## **WEDNESDAY**

The Prayer of Trust  
(Psalm 3)

## **THURSDAY**

The Security of Trust  
(Psalm 4)

## **FRIDAY**

The Confidence of Trust  
(Psalm 27:1-6)

## **SATURDAY**

The Patience of Trust  
(Psalm 27:7-14)

## **SUNDAY**

The Certain Refuge  
(Hebrews 11:1-3, 6; Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11)