

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**Sermon notes from this morning and attachment to flesh out the characters mentioned in **Hebrews chapter eleven....****

**The journey and wonder of faith Hebrews 11**

**I went for a post-Easter stroll along Clevedon prom a couple of days ago. Being the school holidays there were children around. I was walking past a couple of young children, and they were extremely excited because they had just discovered a whole mass of ladybirds on the sea wall. The girl started calling out to her dad to come and see what they had found. It had excited her and her instinct was to invite her dad into this experience of wonder. Life is full of wonder, and there are inexplicable mysteries around us every day, we just need the eyes and imagination to see them. Why did the large cross fall with a crash to the ground during our Tenebrae service just at the time when the service booklet told us that there would be a large crash? Today I want to talk about faith. I'm sure you have had the conversation with someone who doesn't believe in God that they are envious that you have faith and they do not, like it is a magic potion that you have had the good luck to imbibe! We are told clearly and repeatedly in the Bible that faith is open to all. It is given to the seeker by God, but the invitation to come and receive is open to all. But you may say or be told, 'What about this issue or that issue to do with God?' Embrace faith and you will come to know how loving, gracious, kind and faithful God is! You cannot know God from the outside. Faith is our invitation to taste and see that the Lord is good! So, faith is rational, it can be explained, discussed, worked through. It stands up to debate and interrogation. We as Christians are not building weak, cardboard flimsy structures around ourselves in the vain hope that we can get through life without any opposition strong enough to blow our house of cards down!**

**'Faith' may be seen as the magic word, the abracadabra of finding God. However, the Bible tells us that faith, the gift of God, is freely available for all. Look at this list which is often perceived as a summary of the heroes and heroines of the Old Testament. OK,**

these may be acceptable: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph and Moses maybe-although included in that list are a murderer, a drunk and a liar, someone who tried to pass his wife as his sister. But Rahab, the heathen prostitute, Samson-the exceedingly questionable morality of his life, Jephthah-he who made an incredibly foolish oath to God?? The challenges remain the same in the Old Testament as in the New-God calls for absolute confidence in Him and obedience to His will-Gideon going off with 300 men to fight the Midian masses; Noah seeing into the future and building his ark; Abraham becoming a nomad; Rahab protecting the Israelite spies from her own people. They all, despite their faults, trusted that God's way would be victorious. I think that gives great encouragement to those of us who struggle with what used to be called, 'besetting sins', where we are hamstrung repeatedly by the same old obsessions and addictions. The men and women mentioned in this chapter messed up and some did so late in life. Hero Gideon making an idol for Israel to worship for example. God sees us as men and women of faith, His children. This isn't a list of failures: God sees who we are and yes, we take wrong turnings, make unwise decisions, but He doesn't hard that eternally against us!

So, what is this faith built on? Historical facts! We may look back and judge that the stories of Jesus are either exaggerated or even untrue, that His death and resurrection was added by the early church leaders to give a reason for martyrdom for the early believers, but LOOK, many hundreds of people who were alive when Jesus was alive or knew someone who was, committed themselves totally to Him. It cannot be seen that the story of Christ's Godhead was gradually acclaimed-it was there right from the start! The earliest written material after Christ's death and resurrection is generally considered to be the first letter to the Corinthians. In his first chapter, Paul declares: 'Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.' The apostle Peter declared in his sermon preached on the day of Pentecost, on the first day of the Church: "God raised Jesus from the dead and we are all witnesses of this." There is firm evidence that the followers of Jesus worshipped Jesus as God right from the beginning of the Church.

**It's just the same as today-those who repented and turned to Him as the One to redeem and bring them into God's family were saved! The rules are the same today as ever-recognise that you are not perfect and never will be, recognize that Christ is the answer: no other religion enables your past to be swept away and gives you the means of becoming good in the future; and then repent and turn to Him. It is a magical experience, but it is not a hidden solution which only the few can receive as if they were members of the magic circle! It is not only accepting that certain things are true but trusting the person of Christ. The 'saving faith' that it is given by God to those who genuinely believe takes that person out of their selves and puts them into Christ-they enter into a 'faith-union' with Jesus. All that person's own resources are abandoned as it is recognized how limitless are God's and how His grace extends to all. Romans 3: 'For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified freely by His grace'. John 3v16: 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life'. It is a free gift only available from God, but available to all! This is faith. It will start as a tiny thing, a few words said a feeling that something is slightly different, and it will grow until it fills every aspect of your life, it will take you to places like it took Abraham, Noah and Jacob. Not all of it will be pleasant, but always underneath will be the everlasting arms-you may not recognize that until after the event, just as Jacob, the schemer, the one who tried to make deals with God, came to see it only at the end of his life- Verse 21, I love this verse: 'It was by faith that Jacob, when he was old and dying, bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff (an injury from when he encountered an angel.). When you put your faith in God, he trusts you and your life will never be quite the same again! There are those here at our Sunday services who have come to know the power of God during this last year. The Holy Spirit works without borders to draw tender-hearted people in. Men and women, boys and girls: all are welcome at the heavenly feast. No one was too sinful to receive His grace. Remember the thief on the cross!**

**Look at what these named and unnamed men and women had to put up with, some even sawn in two, and they did not receive the promise—they had the eyes of faith which could see the new Jerusalem as a reality, where there would be no more tears and sadness because God would be all in all. They held on to the promises of God, even though they had nothing in the way of outward evidence to support their faith. We are so blessed!**

**I find Keely Hodgkinson the British middle-distance world champion runner extraordinary. She doesn't run with entanglements- badly fitting shoes, a calf strain, a heavy rucksack- and neither do we. It is a person who we have faith in, it is the person of Jesus, not only the man/God figure of the Gospels but God alive today. Not only enduring the cross and its shame, but alive to enable us to cope rejoicing with all the sadness and heartache that may come our way in this vale of tears! Take heart, dear friends. You are loved eternally; your security is rock solid no matter what happens. I quote from the last verses of Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter eight: *'I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.'***

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**Hebrews 11 — Biblical Characters**

<b>Character / Group</b>	<b>Hebrews 11 Reference</b>	<b>Specific Act of Faith Mentioned</b>	<b>Old Testament Passage Describing It</b>
<b>Abel</b>	Hebrews 11:4	Offered a better sacrifice than Cain	Genesis 4:1–10
<b>Enoch</b>	Hebrews 11:5–6	Walked with God and pleased Him	Genesis 5:21–24
<b>Noah</b>	Hebrews 11:7	Built the ark in obedience to God's warning	Genesis 6:9–22; 7–8
<b>Abraham</b>	Hebrews 11:8	Obedied God and went to a land he did not know	Genesis 12:1–9
<b>Abraham</b>	Hebrews 11:9–10	Lived as a stranger in the promised land	Genesis 12–13; 15
<b>Sarah</b>	Hebrews 11:11	Trusted God to give her a child in old age	Genesis 17:15–21; 21:1–7
<b>Abraham</b>	Hebrews 11:17–19	Offered Isaac as a sacrifice	Genesis 22:1–18
<b>Isaac</b>	Hebrews 11:20	Blessed Jacob and Esau concerning their future	Genesis 27
<b>Jacob</b>	Hebrews 11:21	Blessed Joseph's sons and worshipped leaning on his staff	Genesis 48
<b>Joseph</b>	Hebrews 11:22	Spoke of Israel's future departure and requested burial of his bones	Genesis 50:22–26
<b>Moses' Parents</b>	Hebrews 11:23	Hid Moses for three months	Exodus 2:1–10

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<b>Moses</b>	Hebrews 11:24–26	Refused to be called Pharaoh's daughter's son	Exodus 2:10–15
<b>Moses</b>	Hebrews 11:27	Left Egypt, not fearing the king	Exodus 12–14
<b>Moses</b>	Hebrews 11:28	Kept the Passover and applied the blood	Exodus 12:1–30
<b>Israelites</b>	Hebrews 11:29	Passed through the Red Sea	Exodus 14
<b>Israelites</b>	Hebrews 11:30	Marched around Jericho for seven days	Joshua 6
<b>Rahab</b>	Hebrews 11:31	Welcomed the spies and hid them	Joshua 2
<b>Gideon</b>	Hebrews 11:32	Led Israel to victory over Midian	Judges 6–7
<b>Barak</b>	Hebrews 11:32	Led Israel against Sisera	Judges 4
<b>Samson</b>	Hebrews 11:32	Defeated enemies of Israel	Judges 13–16
<b>Jephthah</b>	Hebrews 11:32	Led Israel in battle	Judges 11
<b>David</b>	Hebrews 11:32	Ruled with faith and defeated enemies	1 Samuel 17; 2 Samuel
<b>Samuel</b>	Hebrews 11:32	Faithful prophet and judge	1 Samuel 3; 7

<b>Character / Group</b>	<b>Hebrews 11 Reference</b>	<b>Specific Act of Faith Mentioned</b>	<b>Old Testament Passage Describing It</b>
<b>The Prophets</b>	Hebrews 11:33	Conquered kingdoms, administered justice	Various (e.g., Elijah — 1 Kings 17–19)
<b>Unnamed faithful</b>	Hebrews 11:34	Escaped the sword, gained strength in weakness	Various
<b>Unnamed faithful</b>	Hebrews 11:35	Women received their dead raised to life	1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:18–37
<b>Unnamed sufferers</b>	Hebrews 11:36–38	Endured persecution, imprisonment, and death	Jeremiah; Zechariah; others