

A Greater Faith

JESUS IS GREATER #19 - Pastor Gary Combs - October 5, 2025 - Hebrews 11:1-7

INTRO: Good morning church! We're returning with Part 3 to a series that we began in Fall of 2023. It's entitled, "JESUS IS GREATER: An Exposition of Hebrews." Our theme verse is:

Hebrews 1:4 (NLT) This shows that the Son is far **greater than** the angels, just as the name God gave him is **greater than** their names.

That's the theme of Hebrews: Jesus is greater. Hebrews is an unusual book. It's an epistle, a letter with a benediction and a final greeting, but no salutation, it lists no recipient(s) and contains no author's autograph. Yet its clearly aimed at first century Jewish background Christian believers immersed in a Hellenistic culture. Thus, the title: "Hebrews." For it was certainly aimed at believers with a firm grasp of the Old Testament and familiarity with Temple worship. This internal evidence lends itself to an early date of 65 AD (before the Temple destruction in 70 AD). Hebrews is the only truly anonymous book in the NT. The majority view is that Paul was its author. Others have proposed Barnabas, Apollos or Clement. However, I'm of the viewpoint that it was written by Luke. For it contains astounding similarities in grammar, writing style and high classical Greek found in Luke's other books: The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Each of these three books opens with a four-verse prologue written in Classical Greek. However, though we may not know with certainty the name of its human writer, we can be confident that its true author is the Holy Spirit that inspired it!

Last Fall, we finished up with Hebrews ch.10 in a sermon we titled: "A Greater Possession," because Christ is our greatest possession! Today, we'll be picking back up in chapter 11 and over the next 8 weeks we'll finish the great book of Hebrews! Why is it great? It's great because its main subject is Jesus and JESUS IS GREATER!

Today's message is entitled: A GREATER FAITH. But it's greater not because of its quality or quantity, but because of its object, namely Christ Jesus. It's greater because Jesus is greater.

Need: You've probably heard someone say, "Keep the faith." In our culture, that usually means, "Stay positive," or "Don't give up hope." But notice what's missing—it never defines the object of that faith. No wonder so many today are "deconstructing" their faith, pulling it apart piece by piece until nothing remains, because if faith is only a vague feeling or a cultural inheritance, why hold on to it?

Trans: But biblical faith is different. It's not about how hard you believe—it's about who you believe in. It's not great faith in God that matters, but faith in a great God. And our faith is greater because its object—Jesus Christ—is greater.

BODY: In the epistle of Hebrews, the Jewish background believers were encouraged not to shrink back from believing because of trouble and persecution, but to live by a faith that is greater because it rests in Christ Jesus as its fulfillment as the believers of old had done. We can see why faith that rests in Christ is greater. Why is faith that rests in Christ greater? The text gives three reasons why faith in Christ is greater.

Read text: Hebrews 11:1-7 (ESV) ¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. ⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

WHY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS IS GREATER:

1. Because it's the only faith commended by God.

EXP: (1-4) First, notice the word "faith.". Then circle the word "commendation/commended/commending" (2,4,5 - 4x). Hebrews explains why faith in Christ has always been the only way, even for the OT saints. As Dr. Mohler has said: "One of the author's primary goals is to teach us how to read the Old Testament. Christians must read the Old Testament Christologically. God embedded in the history of redemption types and shadows that pointed forward to Jesus Christ. Thus, from Genesis to Revelation the Bible tells one story—the story of the grace of God found only in Jesus Christ" (Mohler, R. Albert. *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*, 170).

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"Faith" (1-5 - 8x + 2 "it" and "believe") (πίστις, *pistis*) - conviction of the truth of anything, trust, believe. Why are we talking about faith? Because of how ch.10 concluded:

Hebrews 10:39 (ESV) But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

"Assurance" (1) (ὑπόστασις, *hupostasis*) - that which has foundation; confidence, firm trust, assurance.

"Things hoped for" (1) (ἐλπίζω, *elpizō*) - to hope; expect fulfillment of God's promises with full confidence.

"Conviction" (1) (ἐλεγχος, *elegchos*) - a proof, by which a thing is proved or tested; conviction; evidence.

"Not seen" (1) (βλέπω, *blepō*) - to see. We didn't see the crucifixion nor the resurrection, yet we believe.

"Commendation" (2,4,5 - 4x) (μαρτυρέω, *martureō*) - to bear witness, to give a good report. In English: to praise, to present as approved or accepted. Employers ask for references, for "recommendations."

"Created by the Word of God" (3) - We weren't there, but we have faith in God as Creator.

"Abel offered" (4) (προσφέρω, *prospherō*) - to bring a present or a thing, to reach or hand a thing to one

"More acceptable sacrifice" (4) (πλείων θυσία, *pleiōn thysia*) - greater, superior, more excellent... sacrifice. Why was it "more excellent" and "commended?" Because by faith Abel offered a blood sacrifice.

Hebrews 9:22 (ESV) ... and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

"Abel's sacrifice was in some sense foreshadowing the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament and thus the sacrifice of Christ. Abel understood that his greatest problem was that he was under divine judgment, and he needed a propitiatory sacrifice. His blood sacrifice pointed to his own sin and to his hope in God's provision of a sacrificial Savior. This is why Abel's sacrifice was "acceptable" to God: it was offered "by faith" in God's promises" (Mohler, 172).

"Commended as righteous" (4) (δίκαιος, *dikaios*) - righteous, made right with God by faith.

"Still speaks" (4) (λαλέω, *laleō*) - to speak, talk. "His blood crying from the ground to God, shows how precious, because of his "faith," he was still in God's sight, even when dead. So he becomes a witness to us of the blessed effects of faith" (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary).

ARG: **Able's sacrifice was commended because Christ's blood fulfilled it. His Word is better/greater!**

Hebrews 12:24 (ESV) and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

ILL: **Tell the Abel story.** Genesis 4:2-12 (NLT) 2 Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. 3 When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. 4 Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, 5 but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

6 "Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? 7 You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

8 One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

9 Afterward the Lord asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?"

"I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?"

10 But the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!

11 Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. 12 No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth."

APP: Abel's faith pleased God because he trusted God's way, not his own. He gave his best—his firstborn lambs—because he believed God's promise and provision. Today, we do the same when we place our faith in Christ as the only "acceptable sacrifice" for our sins. He died that we might live!

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2. Because it's the only faith that pleases God to draw near.

EXP: (5-6) Now let's look at the 2nd OT exemplar: Enoch. There's more here in Hebrews than in Genesis about him! What can we learn about faith from him? That he "pleased" (5-6) God and took him to be with Him.

"**Enoch was taken up**" (5) (μετατίθημι, *metatithēmi*) - lit., to change places; to transfer, to change, to transport. KJV says, "Enoch was translated." I love the Genesis account in the KJV:

Genesis 5:24 (KJV) And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

"**Not see death**" (5) - Enoch never experienced physical death, only Elijah shares this incredible truth.

"**Pleased God**" (5) (εὐαρεστέω, *euarestēō*) - to be well pleasing; to gratify entirely.

"**Impossible to please God**" (6) (ἀδύνατος, *adunatos*) - no strength, impotent, powerless, impossible.

"These words teach us two important theological truths. First, without faith it is impossible to be *commended*... Second, with faith it is impossible to be *condemned*" (Mohler, 174).

"**Believe that he exists**" (6) (πιστεύω, *pisteuō*) - verb from of *pistis*, faith in God is necessary.

"**He rewards those who seek him**" (6) (ἐκζητέω, *ekzēteō*) - to seek. God rewards those who seek Him.

ARG: God rewards those who seek Him. With what? Himself!

Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV) You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

James 4:8 (ESV) Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...

How do we draw near? Only through faith in Jesus!

Ephesians 2:13 (ESV) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

ILL: Tell the story of Enoch. Genesis 5:18-24 (ESV)

¹⁸ When Jared had lived 162 years, he fathered Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived after he fathered Enoch 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died.

²¹ When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. ²² Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

The original account of his miraculous rapture to heaven is found in four verses in Genesis. We're told twice that he "walked with God" and that he fathered children, and then we're told that "God took him.". Besides this, Jude 1:14-15 tells us that Enoch was a prophet who foresaw the future judgment of God" (Swindoll, Charles R., *Insights on Hebrews*, 171).

APP: Enoch's story reminds us that faith is not just believing about God, but walking with Him. So the question is: Are you walking with God by faith Jesus in a way that pleases Him? To "seek Him" is not a one-time decision but a continual pursuit, and the reward is God Himself. We draw near by walking with Jesus daily, by listening to His Word, by prayer, and by yielding our steps to Him. Like Enoch, may it be said of us—not just that we lived long or accomplished much—but that we walked with God.

3. Because it's the only faith that inherits God's righteousness.

EXP: (7) Noah is our 3rd exemplar. His faith speaks of his obedience to God's Word and to being an "heir of righteousness that comes by faith." "How did Noah survive the judgment of God? The answer is not simply that he built a big boat. What motivated the construction of the ark? Noah believed the word of God. His actions flowed from the fountain of faith" (Mohler, 175).

"**Warned by God**" (7) (χρηματίζω, *chrēmatizō*) - to advise or consult with one about public affairs; to be divinely commanded, admonished, instructed.

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“Reverent fear ... constructed an ark” (7) (εὐλαβέομαι, *eulabeomai*) - to fear; reverence, stand in awe of. “Noah’s obedience to the divine warning was an evidence at once of his fear of God and of the faith which gave substance and present reality to “the things not seen as yet” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*).

“He condemned the world” (7) (κατακρίνω, *katakrinō*) - to give judgment against, to condemn; by one’s good example to render another’s wickedness the more evident and censurable. Like how the light of a candle “condemns” the darkness.

“Heir” (7) (κληρονόμος, *klēronomos*) - an heir; one who receives an allotted possession by right of sonship.

“Righteousness” (4) (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaiosynē*) - state of being righteous, made right with God by faith.

ARG: This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus!

Romans 3:22-24 (NIV) ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

ILL: Tell the story of Noah (Gen. 6-9). In Noah’s day, the whole earth was filled with violence and corruption, and God declared that He would bring judgment through a flood. But Noah “found favor in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen. 6:8). When God warned him of things yet unseen, Noah believed His Word and, in reverent fear, built the ark. For 100 years his obedience stood as a testimony of faith, condemning the unbelief of the world around him. When the flood came, it swept away all flesh from the earth—except Noah and his family, who were saved through the ark.

APP: Yet this story is more than history—it is a shadow of a greater reality. Just as Noah believed God and entered the ark to escape judgment, so we too must believe God’s Word and enter into Christ, our true Ark of salvation. The flood prefigures the final judgment, when the world will once again face the wrath of God against sin. Only those who are in Christ will be spared. Noah became “an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith,” and so do we, when we trust in Christ.

CONCLUSION: “Each of these men—Abel, Enoch, and Noah—exemplified with his life the very definition of faith. They lived in light of the invisible reality, in love with the invisible God, and in anticipation of an invisible future. And each of them, like all people of faith, received the reward of those who please God—not by works, but by faith alone” (Swindoll, 172).

Do you understand why faith in Christ Jesus is greater? It’s because...

1. It’s the only faith commended by God—like Abel, we are declared righteous through the blood of Christ when we trust Him.
2. It’s the only faith that truly draws us near to God—like Enoch, we walk with Him daily and experience His presence.
3. It’s the only faith that inherits God’s righteousness—like Noah, we are saved through Christ, our Ark, and receive the promised reward of eternal life.

Faith in Christ is not about the quality or quantity of our faith; it’s about trusting the One who is greater than anything we can see or imagine.

Christ took our death, our separation, and our sin. And He offers His eternal life, Sonship, and righteousness to those who place their faith in Him! It’s not great faith in God. It’s faith in a great God through Jesus His Son!

Let’s pray.