

1. The Hebrew text our translations are built on tell us “Enoch walked faithfully with God.” The translation that the writer of Hebrews quotes from is a little more dynamic. It reads “Enoch pleased God.” Why is “Enoch pleased God,” a fitting translation of “Enoch walked faithfully with God?”
2. What does it mean to live a life pleasing to God?
3. Why is faith an essential ingredient for a life pleasing to God?
4. What does it mean to “earnestly seek God?”
5. How does God reward those who “earnestly seek him?”

D. NOAH (v. 7)

7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

1. What was particularly bold about Noah’s faith?
2. How would Noah’s faith open him to ridicule and derision?
3. How did God vindicate Noah’s faith?
4. How does 1 Peter 3:15-17 inform what it means to possess a faith that condemns (convicts, or exposes the emptiness of) the world?
5. What happens when we condemn others apart from an acute awareness of our own sin?
6. What happens when we live gracious lives, engage in gentle conversation, and are acutely aware of our own sin?
7. How would you describe “the righteousness that is in keeping with (or comes through) faith?”
8. Why is this kind of character necessary for an effective witness in the world?



One of the most endearing portraits of endurance was Gabriela Andersen-Schiess’ finish in the 1984 Olympic marathon.

It was the first time the women’s marathon was featured as an Olympic event. Schiess was not expected the win, but she was running a good race. It was an unusually hot day, and the humidity was off the charts. Fifteen miles into the race her body began to cramp. By the twenty mile marker the cramps became unbearable. Somehow she missed the last water station and became severely dehydrated. Had it been any other race she would have pulled out, but it was the Olympics, and the Colosseum was looming on the horizon. She entered the tunnel into the stadium and was overcome by heat. Her race pace quickly deteriorated to a slow jog and then a staggering walk. Her left arm went limp. Her right leg seized up. She meandered from one side of the track to the other as she slowly and deliberately moved forward. A medical team rushed to her aide, but she quickly waved them off. They shadowed her for the final hundred meters, expecting her to collapse at any moment. Sensing her agony, the crowd stood to their feet and cheered her on. She fell limp on the finish line. The medical team whisked her into a nearby medical tent where she spent the next few hours recovering.

While she was embarrassed by the spectacle and her poor finish, she became the enduring sweetheart of the 1984 Olympics. It is rare that an Olympic year passes without replaying the dramatic footage of her courageous finish.

In short order, the writer of Hebrews will transport his readers into the Olympic Coliseum and set their feet squarely on the starting line. He will challenge them to take in the audience and consider the race set before them (Hebrews 12:1-2) The race he has in mind is clearly the ancient marathon—a race that calls for grit and endurance. Before he challenges them, “to run with perseverance the race marked out for [them],” he introduces them to those who have run before them, and the one ingredient that is absolutely essential to running and finishing well—enduring faith.

THE ESSENCE OF ENDURING FAITH (vv. 1-2)

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were commended for.

1. How does the writer of Hebrews describe faith?
2. The words translated “confidence” and “assurance” could also be translated “reality” and “evidence.” Faith does far more than give us “confidence” and “assurance”, it turns our hearts to a reality that is far beyond what we can see and touch. How would you describe the reality we only experience by faith in Christ? What about this reality is even more substantial than the things we can see and touch?
3. According to the writer of Hebrews, the focus of our faith is “what we hope for” and want “we do not see.” What are the “things we hope for?” What are the things “we do not see?”
4. What happens when the things we can see and touch become more real to us than the things “we hope for” and “cannot see?”

FOUR EXAMPLES OF ENDURING FAITH (vv. 3-7)

A. CREATION (v. 3)

³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Most of our author’s examples of enduring faith will involve Old Testament heroes who longed for something that would never fully be realized in their life time. His first example of enduring faith, however, highlights our confidence in what God has accomplished in creation.

1. How is the doctrine of creation foundational to our faith in Christ?
2. What are the elements of creation that we can see, feel and touch?
3. How do they display the glory of God?
4. What are the elements of creation that we cannot see, feel and touch?
5. How do they display the glory of God?

B. ABEL (v. 4)

⁴ By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

GENESIS 4:2–5 Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

1. The writer of Hebrew moves quickly from creation to the story of Cain and Abel. While Adam and Eve were the first generation of humanity, Abel is the first person to be commended by God. According to the writer of Hebrews, what exactly was Abel commended for?
2. In the original text (Genesis 4:2-5) there is not any mention of “faith” or the “righteousness.”
 - a. Why is it safe to assume, Abel offered his sacrifice in “faith?”
 - b. Why is it safe to assume that Abel’s faith was credited to him as righteousness?
3. While we might emphasize the quality of the sacrifice (“some of the fruits of the soil” versus “fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.”). Why is the heart behind the sacrifice far more significant than the quality of the sacrifice?
4. How should Abel’s sacrifice inform our worship and service?

C. ENCOCH (vv. 5-6)

⁵ By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.

GENESIS 5:21–24 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.