



“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” Hebrews 11:1.

Abram was told by God “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation,... I will bless those who bless you,... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” Gen. 12:1-3. Abram trusted God because God gave him faith which trusts God. Abram came from an idolatrous heritage, yet, God called him and gave His promise. God would make His name great and all families on earth would be blessed.

Abraham is listed among the great patriarchs of faith in Hebrews 11. Abraham left his homeland at God's direction not knowing what lay ahead. Faith is confident, against all odds and trusts in the Word of God alone. Faith looks to God's guidance, mercy and wisdom in everything placing confidence in God even when we cannot understand what He has in mind.

Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 10:5** **“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”** Faith obeys Christ, even when the situation is beyond our comprehension. In **Hebrews 11:19** the sacred writer tells us what Abraham considered when God said Abraham should sacrifice his only son: **“He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead.”** (*God provided a ram for the sacrifice instead, pointing to Christ's substitutionary death in our place*) Such faith gives obedience to God's Word over against every form of human thought. In so doing, such a faith “glorifies God” in all His wisdom, majesty and glory! **True faith, knows the voice of its Savior; the gentle voice of Jesus calls us by name (St. John 10).**

God's grace has called you to faith as the Explanation of The Third Article confesses. *“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.*

Abraham, along with all the others of great faith listed in **Hebrews 11**, demonstrate what faith really is. The endurance they had was from faith given by God's grace. Abraham left his "comfort zone" on more than one occasion trusting in God's wisdom through it all. We too are often led out of our own "comfort zones" while trusting God in every circumstance. Those listed in Hebrews were not looking to the comforts of this world for security; they did not look for personal greatness or to government or personalities for security. Instead, they looked ahead to what God promises from Christ the Savior. In **First Peter, chapter one**, the sacred writer speaks about "**elect exiles... who are sanctified in the Spirit for obedience to Jesus and for a sprinkling with His blood.**" So we too are "exiles" in this world full of trouble knowing that this is not our permanent home; to quote the hymn "Heaven is our Home."

Going forward, not knowing what lies ahead, we trust our Lord's promises in Christ our Savior as did our great forefathers in the faith as we are reminded in **Hebrews, chapter 11: "The Great Chapter of Faith."** We are encouraged in God's Word as He gives us this uplifting chapter describing how faith gives us endurance by the grace and mercy of God for us in Christ. They lived out their lives in faith and so we too are enabled and strengthened to live out our lives in Christ, trusting in His promises fulfilled in the cross and His resurrection.

In the same chapter, we also hear these words. "**By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of the things that are visible**" **Hebrews 11:3.** We believe that God created everything out of nothing, but by the power of The Word. If we can believe that, which we do by faith, given by God's grace, so too we can believe in His promises in Christ as we receive the Word and Sacraments that gives faith; that strengthens faith; that sustains faith unto life everlasting. Faith is not intellectual ability, not a theory or a hunch. Instead, faith looks forward knowing that God provides salvation and that nothing "**... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord**" **Rom.8:39b. To God be all the glory!**

In Christ,
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