

## Faith is Living

† **Sure foundation for hope** (vv.1-3,8-12)

† **Proof of deeds unseen** (vv.13-16)

In the name of Jesus, our *“living hope”* (1 Peter 1:3), dear fellow heirs of God’s grace and glory:

People talk about “faith” like, “I had cancer, but my faith brought me through.” We tend to assume they mean the same thing as our “faith.” One woman on the phone kept insisting her “faith” was in the doctors and modern medicine. Suggesting they also need God’s blessings made her angry. I’ve not spoken to her in many years. I wonder if the doctors won or whether she’s part of the 100% death rate.

**Faith** needs a better foundation than human opinion. Remember bran muffins? Then the Atkins diet cut out all carbs, leaving many victims depressed because God gave *“wine that gladdens the heart of man...and bread that sustains his heart.”* (Psalm 104:15 NIV) But the Holy Spirit also says, *“Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”* (Deuteronomy 8:3) “Faith” always has an object, but the one object that will never fail is this: *“My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him.”* (Psalm 62:1 NIV) Today God shows us **Faith is Living** as a...

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**Faith** holds up hope of all kinds. You see this if you’re in a hurry to buy gas and move on down the road. Someone with “faith” makes everyone wait in line because they hope to win the lottery. Faith in money will keep them hoping to win as they buy lottery tickets with their kids’ money.

One man in line is scowling because he can do the math in his head; her odds aren’t good. Yet his faith in his own intelligence also hopes there is no God and that *first there was nothing, nothing blew up and became everything*. Some admit their lack of logic, but for them the alternative is unconscionable. In other words, a Creator would judge them. One of Charles Darwin’s successors admitted they did not believe evolution, but it fit their sexual mores. They could sleep where they wanted and not fear God.

But look again at that line of impatience behind the lottery lady. Some are church people who believe evolution is ridiculous, but want to argue people into heaven instead of listening to the Holy Spirit here in Hebrews 11. Creation is a prime example of **Faith is Living** as a **Sure foundation for hope**. *“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.”* **Living Faith** must rest on God’s Word, not man’s science. But while science keeps insisting man has all the answers, people’s hopes keep dying with them. Scientists disagree with each other, but *“faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”* That does not mean **Faith** hangs out in space like “a blind leap.” We have a whole chapter of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, of whom the holy writer says, *“This is what the ancients were commended for.”* Lets focus on just one, Abraham, the father of all believers. His **Faith Living** was a **Sure foundation for hope**.

He could not “Google” this. He had no GPS to talk him through it. He could not even fold out an old map to see where he was headed. *“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”* Every time Abraham and his son Isaac or grandson Jacob entered their tent, they remembered they had no continuing city on earth. God promised them every part of Canaan where they walked. But do you know how much he owned? Only the family cemetery, a cave he bought at the end of a field belonging to Machpelah. (Genesis 23:9)

**Faith is Living** as a **Sure foundation for hope**, but that doesn't mean **Faith** just sits around. God's promise of a son first came when Abraham was 75 and Sarah 65. As the years passed they tried as in our Old Testament Lesson (Genesis 15:1-6) to suggest God might want to use the custom of a servant as their heir. When God said, "No, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir," Sarah suggested Abraham might produce a son with Hagar. But God then said, "No!" to Ishmael too. The years kept flying by as their reproductive powers died. Yet God kept promising, and the couple kept believing so that their faith held up their **hope** not only for a son, but the son of the promise whose descendent would bring the Savior's blessings to all nations.

How long have you had to wait for God's promises to come true? Do you wait patiently? Does your **Living Faith** keep your hopes alive and resting on the **Sure foundation** of God's Word? Is it enough for God to say, "I said so"? Sometimes we think only of the twenty-five years of hoping in God's promises until Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah at ages 100 and 90 respectively. But God's promises of the land would take much longer. **Faith is Living** also as the...

### † **Proof of deeds unseen (vv.13-16)**

How much did Abraham actually own of the Promised Land when he died? The same as Isaac and Jacob, his son and grandson. Everywhere they walked God said belonged to them. But down at the courthouse, the only land titled in their name was that field with a cave where they buried their dead. In the vision of a smoking firepot and blazing torch the LORD told Abraham it would be a long time before his descendants would possess the land. Right after our Old Testament Lesson we read this:

*"As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here...."* (Genesis 15:12-16 NIV)

Look how many tried to keep that from coming true! All of Egypt fought the Exodus until by ten plagues and the drowning in the Red Sea the LORD God destroyed Pharaoh and his army. The Babylonians did not want to free the Jews from captivity, but God had them conquered by the Medes and the Persians. Do you think Romans like Caesar Augustus and Pontius Pilate cared whether God kept His promises? None of their opinions or imperial decrees could stop Abraham's promised Seed from coming as the Christ. God promised a Savior to take away our sins and give us the Promised Land of heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Every world power could only advance God's plans and finally destroy itself.

One promise yet remains. Can you admit what Abraham admitted? *"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."*

In that *"better country"* God says, *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away....And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal."* (Revelation 21:4,10-11 NIV)

What hurts your hopes now? Financial? Relationships? Medical? Worry? God's promises give us better hope than the lottery lady. With God past performance is proof of future returns. Amen.