

HEROES
OF
FAITH

ACCORDING TO HEBREWS 11

ISBN: 978-1-4357-4733-3

© 1993 **Domenico Barbera**,

5489 Desson Ave. Niagara Falls, Ont. L2G
3S9

(Canada) tel. (905) 329-1011 e-mail:

cvl_dbarbera@yahoo.ca

Printed in Spain on August 2008

All rights reserved. No portion of this book
may

be reproduced in any way, without the prior
written consent of the Publisher, except for
brief

quotations for use in articles in which the
book is

being reviewed.

www.parolaevangelica.org

E-mail: info@parolaevangelica.org

Original Title: Gli eroi della **fede** – Secondo
Ebrei 11

Translation by Dino Cianflone

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture
taken from

the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL
VERSION®.

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International
Bible
Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All
rights
reserved.

Works by the same author:

- Is Jesus Christ God?
- The Great Commission of Jesus Christ
- Heroes of the Faith - Hebrews 11
- Is Marriage Divinely Instituted?
- The First Multiplication of Bread
- Nehemiah... A Man Moved, Sustained and Heroically Motivated
- The Spirit World
- Jesus... The Divine Healer
- Faith As Taught In The Bible
- Jacob... A Man Transformed By God
- The Journey of a People - From Egypt to Canaan
- Doing Good To Someone For Love
- Wath the Bible says about Satan
- Mention Women of the Bible
- Some Imperatives From The Bible

DEDICATION

We dedicate the pages of this book to those who, having understood and valued faith, want to express in their lives, the faithfulness of God's promises and the fullness of heavenly blessings.

INDEX

PREFACE	13
INTRODUCTION.....	15
-----PART ONE-----	
Men of faith: from Abel to Noah.....	17
Chapter 1:	
THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH.....	19
1. FAITH, MAN'S PART	22
2. FAITH, GOD'S PART.....	24
3. A STANDARD FOR THOSE THAT DRAW NEAR TO GOD	30
4. THE STANDARD OF HEBREWS 11:6 ...	31
5. TWO THINGS THAT GOD REQUIRES...	33
6. REWARDER OF THOSE WHO SEEK HIM	35
Chapter 2:	
THE NATURE OF FAITH - ITS DEFINITION	39

Chapter 3:

ABEL'S FAITH 45

- 1. ABEL'S OFFERING..... 46
- 2. WHY ABEL'S OFFERING WAS BETTER THAN CAIN'S..... 48
- 3. WHAT WE MUST LEARN FROM ABEL'S FAITH..... 50

Chapter 4:

ENOCK'S FAITH 55

- 1. ENOCK'S LIFE UP TO SIXTY-FIVE YEARS OF AGE..... 56
- 2. ENOCK'S LIFE AFTER SIXTY-FIVE..... 63
- 3. WHAT IT MEANS "TO WALK WITH GOD" 67
- 4. THE 300 YEARS THAT ENOCK WALKED WITH GOD 69
- 5. ENOCK'S FAITH AND GOD'S ASSESSMENT OF IT..... 71
- 6. THE NEW RESIDENCE THAT GOD PREPARED FOR ENOCK..... 73
- 7. WHY ENOCK WAS TAKEN INTO HEAVEN 76
- 8. A SPIRITUAL APPLICATION FOR

CHRISTIANS TODAY 78

Chapter 5:

NOAH'S FAITH 81

1. NOAH, THE PERSON..... 83

2. THE TIME OF NOAH'S MISSION AND ITS
RESULT..... 89

3. NOAH BUILDS THE ARK FOR HIS
FAMILY'S SALVATION 93

4. THE FAMILY SEEN AND ASSESSED
FROM

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE 94

-----PART TWO-----

Men of faith: from Abraham to Joseph . 99

Chapter 6:

ABRAHAM'S FAITH..... 101

1. ABRAHAM'S CALLING.....
103

2. ABRAHAM'S LIFESTYLE.....
109

3. ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE.....
112

Chapter 7:

SARAH'S FAITH..... 121

Chapter 8:

ISAAC'S FAITH..... 129

1. JACOB AND ESAU JOSTLED EACH OTHER IN THE WOMB.....	130
2. AN APPLICATION FOR EVERY DAY LIFE	131
3. THE BIRTH OF JACOB AND ESAU.....	133
4. THE CONDITION OF JACOB AND ESAU	134
5. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE BLESSING	137
6. THE BLESSING GIVEN BY ISAAC TO JACOB AND ESAU	143
Chapter 9:	
JACOB'S FAITH.....	149
1. JOSEPH, JACOB'S FAVOURITE	151
2. JOSEPH'S DREAMS	155
3. JOSEPH'S HARDSHIPS BEGIN.....	159
4. JOSEPH IN EGYPT	167
5. THE PREPARATIONS FOR JOSEPH'S GREATNESS.....	170
6. JOSEPH'S TWO SONS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE.....	174
7. THE PROOF THAT JOSEPH FORGOT ALL HIS SUFFERING.....	176

8. JACOB BLESSES EPHRAIM AND
MANASSEH..... 184

Chapter 10:

JOSEPH'S FAITH..... 189

1. JOSEPH SPEAKS WITH HIS BROTHERS
OF HIS DEATH..... 191

2. JOSEPH'S PROPHECY..... 193

3. THE OATH THAT JOSEPH MADE HIS
BROTHERS SWEAR 194

-----**PART THREE**-----

**Men of faith: from Moses to the prophets
and all those whose names do not appear
in the**

**list of chapter 11 of the letter to the
Hebrews**

..... **197**

Chapter 11:

MOSES' FAITH 199

1. MOSES' BIRTH..... 200

2. MOSES' CHOICE AND DECISION 206

3. MOSES LEAVES EGYPT..... 216

4. MOSES CELEBRATES PASSOVER 223

5. THE PASSAGE THROUGH THE RED SEA
..... 228

Chapter 12:	
THE COLLAPSE OF THE WALLS OF JERICHO	
.....	237
Chapter 13:	
RAHAB'S FAITH	245
Chapter 14:	
GIDEON'S FAITH	257
1. ISRAEL'S CONDITION IN GIDEON'S DAY	
.....	259
2. GOD CALLS GIDEON TO DESTROY	
BAAL'S ALTAR.....	260
3. THE SIGNS THAT GIDEON ASKED FOR	
FROM THE LORD.....	264
4. THE SELECTION OF THE ARMY TO FACE	
THE MIDIANITES	266
5. THE 300 MEN FACE THE MIDIANITES	268
Chapter 15:	
BARAK'S FAITH	271
1. BARAK CALLED BY GOD TO AN	
EXTRAORDINARY ENDEAVOUR	272
2. THE LORD'S COMMAND TO BARAK ...	274
Chapter 16:	
SAMSON'S FAITH	279

1. SAMSON'S BIRTH	280
2. SAMSON'S HEROIC ACTS.....	281
3. THE THREE INSTANCES WHEN IT IS STATED: "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME UPON HIM IN POWER"	283

Chapter 17:

JEPHTHAH'S FAITH..... 289

1. WHO WAS JEPHTHAH	290
2. JEPHTHAH IS CALLED TO FREE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FROM THE AMMONITES.....	294
3. JEPHTHAH'S HEROIC ACT COMPLETED	296
4. JEPHTHAH MARCHES AGAINST THE KING OF THE AMMONITES.....	298
5. JEPHTHAH'S TRAGIC VOW.....	299

Chapter 18:

DAVID'S FAITH 303

1. THE DEFEAT OF THE GIANT GOLIATH	304
2. DAVID SAVES KEILAH FROM THE PHILISTINES	308
3. DAVID'S GREAT VICTORY OVER THE AMALEKITES	309

4. DAVID'S VICTORY OVER THE
PHILISTINES 311

Chapter 19:

SAMUEL'S FAITH 313

1. SAMUEL'S BIRTH AND CONSECRATION
..... 314

2. SAMUEL'S FIRST HEROIC ACT..... 315

3. SAMUEL'S FAITH EVIDENT IN VARIOUS
CIRCUMSTANCES..... 317

Chapter 20:

THE FAITH OF THE PROPHETS..... 321

1. THE PHRASE: "SHUT THE MOUTHS OF
LIONS" 322

2. THEY QUENCHED THE FURY OF THE
FLAMES 328

3. THEY ESCAPED THE EDGE OF THE
SWORD..... 332

Chapter 21:

**THE FAITH OF THOSE WHO'S NAMES ARE
NOT MENTIONED IN THE LIST OF
CHAPTER**

11 OF THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS.

35

1. EXAMINATION OF THE BIBLE TEXT... 336

2. COMPARISONS WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT.....	339
3. SOME THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPEL OF PROSPERITY.....	342
CONCLUSION.....	349
BIBLIOGRAPHY	351

PREFACE

A **x Abundantia cordis os loquitur!** was what our Latin ancestors used to say and this is how I would summarize this work by Pastor Domenico Barbera, as he expresses himself from the exuberance of what he feels in his heart, with a style rich in detail.

The value of this work, beyond its simplicity, fluency and depth, resides in the manner in which it connects chapter 11 of the letter to the Hebrews with the Biblical texts of the Old Testament, to survey various characters (heroes of the **faith**) in the light of the context in which they are found and of other particulars that the letter to the Hebrews does not mention.

This fascinating study is of great assistance even to the least erudite reader of the Bible, because the clear and detailed exposition that the author provides does not require intellectual effort.

Pastor Domenico Barbera was born in Lascari, in the province of Palermo (Sicily), in 1934. From boyhood, he felt a strong calling to the ministry and in 1957; he was already the head of the ‘**A**

Community of Misilmeri and Palermo as Pastor with the Assemblies of God in Italy. Later (1960), he assumed responsibility for the Church of Agrigento until 1972. Meanwhile (1966), he obtained the administrative appointment of “Minister” with the Assemblies of God in Italy (ADI). In 1972, he immigrated to Canada where he currently resides, carrying on his activity as an “ordained minister” with “The Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada” in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

This is not the author’s first work. He has previously written a volume intended for Jehovah’s Witnesses, proving Biblically that Jesus Christ is God and two other volumes about Christ’s great commission to go and preach the Good News of salvation to everyone.

May this study, motivate the reader to follow in the footprints of the “Heroes of the **faith**”, awakening in each person a new blaze of love for our Lord Jesus Christ “author and perfecter of our **faith**” (Hebrews 12: 2).

Nino Tirelli

INTRODUCTION

If we have assumed the burden of writing about Hebrews 11, we have not done so simply to provide the reader with another commentary – even if certain things that we write, aside from not being found in ordinary commentaries, could be considered as such, above all, due to the different content – but in order to emphasize the importance of **faith** and its effectiveness, especially in the exercise of practical every day life.

Even though over the years, much has been written about **faith**, we believed it appropriate to conduct deeper research into the men and women listed in Hebrews 11, with the sole objective of understanding the different moments and situations that characterized the lives of these people.

Undoubtedly, the way in which we have tackled this work, even though it was no small task, above all in relation to the Biblical text, we believe was worthwhile for the inevitable benefit that will result towards

understanding and assessing the characters that we are discussing in regard to their **faith**. We have no pretension of I having made sensational discoveries and much less to have penetrated into some type of forced interpretation.

We have kept ourselves, in our opinion, to an acceptable level, above all if the value of the Biblical text is kept in mind as we have studied and evaluated it. The reader will obviously not lack any advantage in a deeper examination of what we have written in this work. Biblical texts are quoted from the “New International Version” unless otherwise indicated.

We feel an obligation to express heartfelt thanks to our beloved brother Nino Tirelli for his work in reviewing and editing the text with dedication and precision. The best that we can wish for all readers is that everyone, beyond benefiting from it, would know how to appreciate and consider **faith**, not simply from an intellectual point of view or bound by one particular denomination, but above all with Hebrews 11:6 in mind:

*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.*

Niagara Falls, August 1993

Domenico Barbera

PART ONE

MEN OF **FAITH**: FROM ABEL TO NOAH

Chapter 1

THE IMPORTANCE OF **FAITH**

We define “heroes of **faith**”, not in the sense of being “superhuman, semi-divine, equipped with particular prerogatives and virtues”, but in the sense of:

One that, in a war action, demonstrates valour, courage, daring; valiant warrior, that has been distinguished for his extraordinary exploits; someone that fights for an ideal, sacrificing his personal interests, someone that takes upon himself the defence of a noble

cause; courageous supporter, patron, champion, martyr. Also: one that in battle and in suffering, has acquired deep wisdom, nobility and strength of mind.

Hebrews 11 is a passage in Scripture that speaks primarily about **faith** and men of **faith**, using language that is particularly rich for religious life and which encourages anyone that wants to follow, in their practical existence, the example of the characters whose actions are described in this part of the Scriptures. In this chapter 11 of the letter to the Hebrews, the term “**faith**” is used 20 times; the phrase: “by **faith**” is used 19 times. Sixteen people and two localities (the Red Sea and Jericho) are mentioned of which it is written: “by **faith**”.

From each of these people (not counting all the others whose names are not listed in this chapter), there is much to learn. They can put us on that path of **faith** in which it is possible even today, to see and experience the immensity and **faithfulness** of God. Through the centuries, the subject of **faith** has been the object of various and deep meditations.

It has been illustrated with many examples and many people that the Bible itself presents with the aim of helping us realize the promises of God contained in it. Even if **faith** has been interpreted as something that projects us into the future and of which we

are in absolute need, nonetheless, we cannot rule out that it has to do with present life. Indeed, if we want to be more precise, the prospect of a future cannot be spoken of if in the present there is a lack of **faith** that extends over our present existence and life beyond the tomb.

All the men of **faith** that the Bible presents to us and all those that the history of Christianity can number in their ranks are meant as examples to be imitated. It is, therefore, not out of place for us also to speak about **faith** and about men of **faith** without which the constellation of Christian life would be devoid of those vivid lights that shine in the dark night.

If we speak of it, we do not do so because enough has not already been said about it, but in order to try to understand that in the right measure, all those factors, internal and external had a strong role in the fulfillment of all those promises of blessing that were fulfilled in their lives. Even if for some of them, not everything turned out in their earthly lives, the fact is always valid that **faith** is needed to have a rich existence of the blessing of God. In Hebrews 11:6, we find it written:

*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.*

The structure of this text presents, on the one hand, man as he approaches God and on the other, God who expresses His satisfaction with him. It becomes clear then that there are two aspects manifested by **faith**: one that regards man and the other that regards God. In order to better understand this truth, we will do our best by following a certain order in the treatment of the text and we will emphasize all those elements that regard man with God and God with man.

1. FAITH, MAN'S PART

Faith from a practical point of view

From a practical point of view, we want to ask: "What is **faith**?" This question would seem out of place if we failed to explain what **faith** is from the point of view of its definition. If we ask this question, it is not because we want to ignore the value of the definition of **faith** given to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews (we will return to it later), but because we want to understand the merit and importance of **faith** from a practical point of view. We can answer our question as follows:

Faith *is a fundamental and indispensable element for Christian life.*

I believe that it will not be superfluous to state that there is a difference between what is useful and what is indispensable. There

are many things in life that are useful, but not all are indispensable.

1) I can do without culture, even if it is very desirable, but I cannot do without **faith**, precisely because **faith** is one of those things that are indispensable. Romans 1:17 says: *The righteous will live by faith*. Thus, **faith** is greater than culture and is more important.

2) I can do without friends and acquaintances, even though they are important for shaping social life, but I cannot do without **faith**. Without friends and acquaintances, I can move forward along the path of life, even if in some circumstances, a *friend is better than a brother* (Proverbs 18:24); but without **faith** I cannot walk, much less stand. **Faith**, therefore, is greater than friends and acquaintances.

3) I can do without property of any kind, even though possessions make me appear before men as someone, but I cannot do without **faith**.

Therefore, **faith** is greater than possessing property of any kind.

4) I can do without family, even though it is source of warmth, affection, care and love; but I cannot do without **faith**. If I must be far away from my family, without that warmth and without that care to which I am accustomed and surrounded, I would suffer; I would feel the emptiness, but I would not be

impeded in the path of life. **Faith**, therefore, is greater than family relations.

It is the supporting pillar

Faith is the supporting pillar of our Christian life. There are many pillars in a house, but not all are called “supporting columns”. Even if pillars are used to join the bricks of a wall and make a joint on which to set a pylon, it is these that support the entire weight of the house. Our lives can very well be compared to a house.

If this house is constructed without a solid foundation, it is destined to collapse when floods and wind descend upon it; but if the house has a solid foundation, the wind may blow, the flood waters may rise, but that house will not collapse (Matthew 7:24-27).

Since **faith** is a supporting pillar of our Christian life, it is the only one that will allow us to endure all the weight of the various storms of life and of all the violent hurricanes unleashed against it.

Even if we were to lose all earthly and human comfort and we found ourselves faced with a thousand problems of life; despairing of hope and if we had to go through “*the valley of the shadow of death*” alone, we would find the strength to cry out: *I will fear no evil, for you are with me* (Psalm 23:4). This is **faith** and

this **faith** is a supporting pillar of Christian life.

It is something that makes me pleasing to God

Since Hebrews 11:6 states that *without **faith** it is impossible to please God*, it goes without saying that **faith** is the only thing that makes me pleasing to God. Being pleasing to God does not only mean that we are accepted with intimate satisfaction, appreciation and approval, but it also means: to cheer someone, to render him content and satisfied. This is the aspect of **faith** that regards God with man which, not only will we deal with immediately, but we will try essentially to emphasize it in order to better understand it.

2. FAITH, GOD'S PART

It is pleasing to God

From the text in Hebrews 11:6, what appears clear is not only the part that concerns man, but it also emphasizes the part that concerns God.

Perhaps we have never heard that with **faith** there is something that has to do with God. I do not hide the fact that for many years I had never seen this aspect of **faith**. But as I meditated on the phrase “please him”, I realized this important truth.

The Greek word used in Hebrews 11:6 is:

“euarestesai”, from **“euaresteo”** which means:

- 1) *Appeals to; is pleasing*
- 2) *To be content, to take delight in.*

In turn, the term “pleasing”, from a linguistic point of view means:

“To accept with intimate satisfaction; to appreciate, to approve of, to cheer someone, to render content and satisfied”.

According to this linguistic definition (which is perfectly coherent with the Greek meaning of the term), **faith** is something that brings joy to God; something that satisfies Him; that makes Him happy. Therefore, with my **faith**, I can make my God happy, I can satisfy Him, and I can delight Him. Perhaps these simple statements, at first, may seem absurd, excessive and practically filled with fanaticism. But if we consider the Scriptures carefully, we realize that God wants to be pleased.

Just as God “grieves” over man’s wickedness, so is He pleased, not only when man does what is right, but above all for the **faith** that he shows.

Since my **faith** pleases God, as a believer, I must be concerned that my Lord be delighted by the joy that I convey to Him. From an

unbelieving and perverse world, God cannot expect anything that will satisfy Him.

The world, meaning humanity that lives alienated from God, has always been and will always be the reason for God's sorrow and there is no satisfaction for Him in what the world does. The only ones that can make God happy are all those that have **faith**, precisely because **faith** gives Him joy and satisfaction. In order to better appreciate and understand the above statement, keep in mind the following:

1) I can please myself and not please

God

This means to say that what may bring me joy, does not always bring joy to God. How often are we extremely happy and satisfied with something that we have done by our own endeavours and perhaps we are proud of our success, of the way things turned out and we are persuaded that because we are happy and satisfied, then our God must also be happy? What we do is not always in agreement with God's will and not everything that man does is based on **faith**. If, without **faith**, I cannot satisfy and please God, then it is clear that anything I do without **faith** will never be a reason for God to rejoice.

2) I can please friends and relatives and not please God

We can think, for example, of all those comedians that make their audiences go mad with joy at their shows, but often they themselves remain outside that state of happiness and satisfaction.

It is what pleases God

It is interesting and, at the same time, important to consider the linguistic meaning of the term “to please”.

Make happy, to amuse, to feel joy, to feel satisfaction, satisfied.

With my **faith** I can make my God happy; I can satisfy my Lord; I can make Him feel joy and satisfy Him. Is it possible to think of these terms when we apply these concepts to God? Perhaps we are inclined to always think of ourselves and the reasonable hope of God does not come to mind. Or perhaps we think that we are in need of happiness, amusement, joy and satisfaction.

These are blessings that come from above and it is God that gives man happiness, enjoyment, joy and satisfaction.

How is it possible that I am able to delight my God as though He possessed the same necessities and hopes as me? If we look at the Scriptures carefully, the veil that covers our eyes will be removed and we will be able to see the truth.

There are many passages in the Bible that speak about taking delight in man, such as for example:

Psalm 111:2; 112:2; 119:16, 35, 47, 70; Romans 7:22. But not many speak about delighting God; those few that do are sufficient to prove that God also has His delight. Through the examination of these texts, we can better explain what we stated previously. We believe that Job 22:3 can be cited as a first text. This passage provides us an important element to keep in mind in the course of our meditation. The text says:

What pleasure would it give the Almighty if you were righteous? What would he gain if your ways were blameless?

This text is clear enough to help us understand (even if it is presented in the form of a question), that God does not gain pleasure from the righteousness of man. That is to say that whatever man does that merits being attributed as just, provides no pleasure to the Omnipotent.

Keeping this truth in mind, let us examine those texts that speak about what does delight God.

The first reference is found in Isaiah 62:4:

No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the

LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married.

The reference is to Zion and therein does the Lord take His delight. On two different occasions Jesus is declared, by the Father, to be His Son **“with whom I am well pleased”**: at the river Jordan (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) and on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; 2 Peter 1:17). Once, Isaiah 42:1 is applied to Jesus (cp. Matthew 12:18) and twice He is presented as the “son, whom I love” in two parables (Mark 12:6 and Luke 20:13).

These are the only texts that can be quoted as confirmation that God is well pleased and for the most part, His satisfaction is expressed in His Son. It is interesting, at this point, to verify the meaning of the phrase “well pleased”.

1. “Dear, loved, bound in tender affection (and this assumes a mutual relationship of authentic kindness, therefore the good of one is identified with the good of the other) as happens, for example, in the relationship between spouses, in the intimacy of the family and in friendship.
2. That is loved with a tender sense of protection and harmony and generosity (such as the love that comes from God to His creation, from parents to their children, from superiors to their underlings).

3. That is loved with thankfulness, reverence, esteem, respect (such as the love that comes from the created to their Creator, from a son to his father, from one that is protected to his benefactor).

4. In a tangible sense: that which is the occasion or cause of pleasure, joy, relief, comfort.

5. Pleasant diversion, amusement such as found in art, science (but without deep engagement or total dedication of one's intellect), or a collector of art works, old medals, rare and precious objects ".

Since Jesus is presented as "pleasing", meaning He who gives and causes pleasure, joy and satisfaction to the Father, He can be taken as a model to better understand the statement in Hebrews 12:2: *Looking to Jesus, the leader and perfect example of our **faith*** (Luzzi). Personally, I am not disposed to accept this translation for the following reasons. There are two words in the Greek text of Hebrews 12:2 that must be kept in mind.

1) The term "**arkegos**" means: "Root cause, principle, initiator, founder, author, head, monarch, chief.

2) The term "**teleiotes**" means: "one who completes, perfection, completion".

3) Jesus is presented as the reference point to **faith** and not **faith** as the reference point

to Jesus. Thus, it is more correct to translate it:

*Keeping our eyes on Jesus, author and finisher of our **faith**, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

If **faith** originates in Jesus (because it is He that brought it into existence), it goes without saying since **faith** has a course of development to follow, that Jesus who initiated it, is also the One to carry it to its fulfillment or perfection. If **faith** is pleasing to God and God is cheered and satisfied by it; and if Jesus is specifically presented as pleasing to the Father and keeping in mind that He is the author of **faith**, it goes without saying that Jesus causes joy and satisfaction to the Father. In the same way, all those that have **faith** cause joy, satisfaction and pleasure to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. A STANDARD FOR THOSE THAT DRAW NEAR TO GOD

*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 (Hebrews 11:6).*

The middle portion of this text presents us a standard for anyone that would draw near to God. What is a standard? It is that which

serves as a rule, guide, measure, and example. Man, in all of his activities, has standards that regulate various manifestations; both in relation to his private life and in relation his lifestyle.

Let us take, for example, a famous University that is concerned with its prestige and with the development of specialized studies. Usually, there are strict standards that regulate the course of the University and anyone that wants to attend it will have to submit to those rules. If an applicant, for instance, wants to apply for admission with an average grade of 70%, he would be rejected because the school has a standard that establishes a minimum requirement of 80%.

In every professional activity or every competition for a certain work position, there are standards that are established: level of education, experience, ability, etc. God also has His rules for all men of every age; patterns that He makes known to us so that by knowing them, we can conform to His Divine will.

4. THE STANDARD OF HEBREWS 11:6

The standard of Hebrews 11:6 concerns anyone that draws near to God. We must immediately state that this rule is not selective as though to say: You, so and so, can approach God, while you cannot. God

has not established a discriminatory criterion for men. There are no personal preferences or considerations. Everyone, great and small, men and women, learned or ignorant, white or black, healthy or sick; all can draw near and no one will be rejected by God. The men of the Old Testament knew the blessedness of drawing near to God *Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts!* (Psalm 65:4)

Even though the words of this text seem to emphasize the fact that it is God that grants this privilege to man, nonetheless, the declaration that no one that draws near to the Lord will be rejected, always remains true.

... whoever comes to me (Jesus) I will never drive away (John 6: 37).

Some have testified how good it was for them to draw near to God.

But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds (Psalm 73:28).

Often, people who read the writings of the Old Testament may think that not all men have free access to God; that only a small number of people or a small nation enjoys this particular privilege. With the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ among men, things have changed for everyone. All men have been

placed in a position of privilege. The following text confirms this.

*In him (the Lord Jesus Christ) and through **faith** in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12).*

If there existed any difficulty for man to draw near to God before the coming of Jesus Christ, it was removed by Christ in virtue of what He obtained on behalf of man; freedom to draw near to God. Now the way that leads to God is free, because Christ has made it so. As a result, man, regardless of his social condition, can very well, if he wants to, draw near to God with full confidence through **faith** in Christ.

In fact, not only has Christ made access to God possible, but more, for anyone that places his **faith** in Him, He Himself will be the presenter before the Father. There is therefore no concern or problem that man cannot bring to God.

5. TWO THINGS THAT GOD REQUIRES

To anyone who comes to God

This phrase “to draw near” has a particular meaning, in that it speaks to us about “approaching” God. This is not about drawing near to a man, a religious organization or a local church, but about drawing near to God. Today, as always, from when Adam first sinned by doing the opposite of what God had

commanded him, man has always distanced himself more and more from the Lord, to the point where he has elevated a wall between himself and his God. If Hebrews 11:6 contains the phrase “comes to him”, it is because God wants to teach us that He desires that man does not remain eternally separated from Him.

The very fact that Jesus Christ came among men, suffered and died for them, is overwhelming proof of the great opportunity that God offers to humanity to draw near to Him by **faith** in Christ Jesus. God never coerces man and He never acts against their will. God wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

Only when man wants it, will he realize what God has done for his salvation. The access path to God is open; all can pass over it without discrimination of any kind and all those who make the decision to draw near to God will have made a good choice for life and eternity.

He must believe that He exists

With the exception of man’s free choice when he decides to draw near to God, once this decision is made, he must know what God desires and what the way that he must follow before God is. “He must believe that He exists”. Notice that it is not a counsel and much less a suggestion. Counsels and

suggestions can be accepted or rejected. It is commanded, compulsory and firm: "He must".

This is not a condition that God places before someone that is undecided; it is given to those who already have decided to come near to God.

He must believe that He exists. In what sense must this phrase be understood? Even if we explain it in the sense of God's existence, as some commentators have done, we believe that the meaning goes beyond a simple conceptual truth. The very fact that a person comes to God, already of itself, implies a conviction of God's existence, otherwise, drawing near would make no sense. God "is" and anyone that draws near to Him must believe that He is. It is not, therefore, about a God of the past or even about a God of the future, but of the God of the present.

Faith in God must not be professed in what concerns the past and it must not even be placed in the future: it must be in the present. Today, God hears me; He comes to my aid. Today, God saves me; frees me, heals me and fills me with every good thing.

This truth is unknown by a multitude of believers. They know how to speak very well about what God has done in times past; they also know how to speak with a certain resoluteness of what He will do in the future. But it is to the present that God wants to

bring us. It is of the actual moment that He wants us to think, because **faith** must find its way to exist and to express itself in the present. It is in the present that God's **faithfulness** must be experienced by what He has said or promised. What is the value of remembering what our forefathers saw and spoke about (Psalm 44:1) and what the children of God will have in the glory of eternity when our present is empty and dark?

6. REWARDER OF THOSE WHO SEEK HIM

If the person that comes to God must believe that He exists in the present, it is not incongruous to believe that the same God of time is the rewarder of anyone that seeks Him. Usually, when we think and speak about rewards, it is generally in reference to the future when God will give a reward to each according to his works.

We cannot deny the many statements in the Bible concerning the future. But the reward of which Hebrews 11:6 speaks is for the present.

That means that **faith** will not only be rewarded beyond the tomb, but it will also be for present life. Living the Christian life with the perspective and certainty that our **faith** is rewarded in the present means that, in the final analysis, we live with the knowledge of Divine riches.

Faith does not bring a person to live his life in misery, as though he had nothing but words.

Jesus came to give us life and existence in abundance (John 10:10). If, in the course of this present life, we live in dryness and misery, this is not the existence that Jesus has given us. **Faith** takes possession of Divine riches and when a person comes to God, he does not do so only to confess his **faith** in God, to believe that He is the God of the present, but he draws near also to receive the answer to his prayer. If he seeks God with the burning desire of David:

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water (Psalm 63:1).

If he holds firmly to his purpose:

And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever (1 Chronicles 28:9).

And if he pays attention:

Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin.

The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you (2 Chronicles 15:2).

If he seeks Him with all his heart (Psalm 119:2) and, above all, if he believes what Jesus said: *Ask and it will be given to you* (Matthew 7:7), then **faith** will be rewarded and he will be able to testify of the truthfulness and **faithfulness** of the Word of God and His promises for present life and for all eternity (Psalm 34:4). Let us be committed to God; **faithful** to Him and He will do what He has promised.