

Jesus Makes Our Faith Complete



SABBATH—MARCH 5



The Christian life is the same as a race.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Hebrews 10:35–39; Hebrews 11:1–19; Hebrews 11:20–28; Hebrews 11:31; Hebrews 12:1–3.

MEMORY VERSE: “We must never stop looking to Jesus. He is the leader of our faith, and he is the one who makes our faith complete. He suffered death on a cross. But he accepted the shame of the cross as if it were nothing because of the joy he could see waiting for him. And now he is sitting at the right side of God’s throne” (Hebrews 12:2, ERV).

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE chapters in Hebrews? Most people will say they like Hebrews 11 and 12 the best. These chapters show us how the Christian life is the same as a race. If we run to the end, we will get a rich reward.

We now run the last part of this “race.” Jesus stands at the finish line to cheer us on. Jesus already ran the race for us. So, He is the best Example of how we should run. Jesus ran ahead of us to open a way to God in heaven (Hebrews 6:19, 20; Hebrews 10:19–23). So, we can trust the reward that waits for us when we finish the race.

Hebrews 11 also explains the meaning of faith. When we have faith, we trust in God’s promises before we see them happen. In our lesson for this week, we will ask: What is faith? How did people in the Bible show faith? Most of all, how did Jesus show us faith? Jesus “is the one who makes our faith complete” (Hebrews 12:2, ERV). So, He is our best Example, for sure.

LIVING BY FAITH (Hebrews 10:35–39)

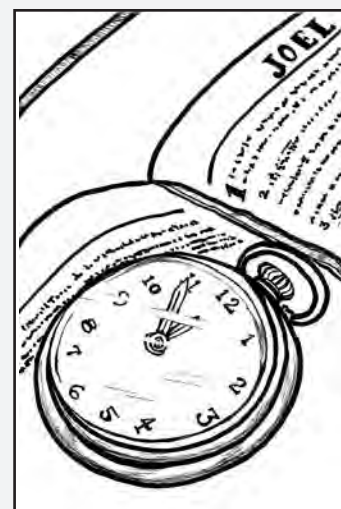
Read Hebrews 10:35–39. What does God say to us in these verses?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are the end-time people of God. So, God expects us to be patient and not give up. Then we will get the things God promised us (Revelation 13:10; Revelation 14:12). What is the secret to not giving up? Paul tells us: “We must hold on to the hope we have” (Hebrews 10:23, ERV; Hebrews 4:14). Paul already told us that God did not give to the Israelites in the desert the rest He promised. The Israelites failed to get the promised rest because they had no faith (Hebrews 3:19). The book of Hebrews shows us that God is ready to give Christians the things that He promised (Hebrews 9:28; Hebrews 10:25, 36–38). So, Christians must show faith if they want to get these things (Hebrews 10:39).

Paul starts his talk about faith with a quote from Habakkuk 2:2–4. In these verses, Habakkuk asks God why He lets evil people continue to hurt good people (Habakkuk 1:12–17). Habakkuk and his people are suffering. So, they want God to punish right away the ones who hurt them. God promises Habakkuk that He will help the people. But the people must be patient (Habakkuk 2:2–4). Habakkuk and his people live at a time before the promise will happen. In the same way, we live at a time when we must wait for God to keep all His promises to us. God’s promise continues in the book of Hebrews: “ ‘In just a little while, he who is coming will come. He will not wait any longer [will not delay]’ ” (Hebrews 10:37, NIRV; read also Habakkuk 2:3).

This message is really about Jesus. Jesus is the One who comes. So, does Jesus really delay His coming and put off His promises to us? Not at all! Jesus already came to die for us (Hebrews 9:15–26). He also will come again at the right time, for sure (Hebrews 9:27, 28; Hebrews 10:25).

God also says to Habakkuk: “ ‘The one who is right with God will live by faith’ ” (Hebrews 10:38, NIRV). Paul says the same thing in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. Romans 1 is helpful because it says that “we are made right with God by faith in Him” (Romans 1:17, NLV). This verse shows us that God saves us by His mercy. His faith makes us loyal to Him. Because God keeps His promises to us (2 Timothy 2:13), we stay loyal to Him.



We live at a time when we must wait for God to keep all His promises to us.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM (Hebrews 11:1–19)

Paul explains what faith is: “Now faith is being sure we will get what we hope for. It is being sure of what we cannot see” (Hebrews 11:1, NLV). Then Paul gives us a list of people in the Bible who showed faith. They showed their faith by the way they lived.

Read Hebrews 11:1–19. What did these heroes of faith do that showed their faith? How do their actions show us that they were sure of getting the things that God promised them?

One of the most important persons in Hebrews 11 is Abraham. Abraham obeyed God. Abraham was willing to give Isaac to God as a burnt offering. This act teaches us many things about faith.

Isaac was not the only son Abraham had. Abraham also had a son with Hagar, the servant of Sarah. Sarah did not want Ishmael or his mother to live with the family anymore. God told Abraham to honor the wish of Sarah. God promised to take care of Ishmael and Hagar. So, Abraham sent Ishmael and Hagar away. God promised to make Abraham the father of His special people. God chose Isaac, not Ishmael, to help start this family (Genesis 21:12, 13). But in Genesis 22, God asks Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. At first look, this command goes against the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12–21, right? Paul talks about this strange command in Hebrews 11:17, 18.

Paul tells us how Abraham solves the problem about what to do. Abraham believes that God will wake up Isaac from the dead after Abraham gives him to God as a burnt offering. The faith of Abraham is surprising because we do not read about anyone in the Bible who woke up from the dead before this time. How did Abraham come to believe this powerful Bible truth? Hebrews 11:11 says that Isaac was born by the power of God. At that time, Abraham was a very old man. Sarah herself was old. She never had any children before. Paul says, “When there was no reason for hope, Abraham believed” (Romans 4:18, NIV). Abraham “believed that God could make dead people live” (Romans 4:17, WE; read also Romans 4:19, 20). Abraham and Sarah had as much chance of having a child as a dead person! But God caused Isaac to be born from their “dead” bodies anyway. So, Abraham believed God can work this same miracle in the future. God can wake up Isaac from the dead.



God asks Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering.

MOSES: BELIEVING IN WHAT CAN'T BE SEEN
(Hebrews 11:20–28)

Hebrews 11:20–28 tells us about men in Bible history who had strong faith. What things did these men do? How do these men show their hope in the things they can't see?

Moses also is a very important person in this chapter about faith. When Moses was born, his parents hid him from Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Pharaoh commanded that all baby Hebrew boys should be killed. But the parents of Moses “were not afraid of the king” (Hebrews 11:23, NLV). Later, when Moses “was grown up, he did not want to be called [named] the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (Hebrews 11:24, WE). The daughter of Pharaoh is the Egyptian princess who adopted Moses. As her adopted son, Moses was chosen to be the next king of Egypt. But Moses chose to become the leader of freed slaves.

Compare the experience of Moses in Hebrews 11:24–27 with the Christians in Hebrews 10:32–35. What is the same about both experiences?

Moses sees that God offers him a better reward than Pharaoh offers him. Pharaoh promises Moses something he can see: riches and power on this earth. God promises Moses something that he can see only by faith. Moses chooses the reward God offers him. The reward from God is the same reward we read about in Hebrews 10:35. God promises this reward to everyone who believes in Him.

For sure, these words about Moses touched the readers of Paul in a powerful way. The Christians suffered insults because of their faith. Evil people hurt them and took their belongings (Hebrews 10:32–34). Some of the Christians were thrown in prison because they chose to follow Jesus (Hebrews 13:3). In the same way, Moses chose to join the people of God. Moses lost much in this life because of his choice. Moses traded the riches of Egypt for insults. Why? Because Moses believed that the reward God offered him was better than anything Egypt offered him.

What tests and troubles have you had because of your faith? What did you give up or lose because of your faith? How does the reward waiting for you cheer your heart?



When Moses was born, his parents hid him from Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

THE FAITH OF RAHAB (Hebrews 11:31)

Read Hebrews 11:31 and Joshua 2:9–11. In these verses, we read about Rahab. Rahab was born among people who did not worship God. Rahab also was a prostitute. As a prostitute, Rahab sold her body for sex to get money. So, why is this woman included in the list of Bible heroes?

For sure, many people do not expect to see Rahab's name on the list in Hebrews 11. Rahab is one of only two women that Paul names in his list. Rahab is number 10 on the list. The first few names before her name are the early fathers of faith. Each of these men is known to be holy. When we come to Rahab, we are surprised for three reasons. She is a woman. She is not a Hebrew (or Jewish). She also is, as Paul said, a prostitute.

The most surprising thing about Rahab is that the list ends with her name. Why was Rahab's name the last one? Paul writes his list in a special form. Whenever Paul adds a new name to his list, Paul introduces this new person by telling us what this person did by faith. Paul starts with the story of Cain and Abel and tells us what Abel did by faith. Then Paul tells us about the next heroes of faith in his list: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. The next big hero of faith in Bible history is Joshua. We may expect Paul to say to us, "By faith, Joshua leads the people to the Promised Land." But Paul does not write about Joshua. Paul writes about the faith of Rahab. Then Paul adds, " 'What more should I say?' " (Hebrews 11:32, WE). Paul then adds some names and tells us about things that happen later on in Bible history. But Paul does not give us a lot of information about these things.

So, why is Rahab on the list of heroes of faith? What was her act of faith? Rahab heard, believed, and obeyed without seeing the things she believed in. She did not see the Ten Awful Curses God put on Egypt. Rahab did not see God lead His people on dry land through the Red Sea. Rahab did not see water flow from the rock or bread fall from heaven. But Rahab believed in God anyway. She is a good example of faith for the Christians that Paul writes to in the Book of Hebrews. These Christians did not hear Jesus preach or see Him do a miracle. But they believe in Jesus and accepted Him as their Savior. Rahab is a good example for us, too. We also did not see Jesus do any of these wonderful miracles. God asks us to believe in Jesus anyway, the same as Rahab.



Rahab heard, believed, and obeyed without seeing the things she believed in.

JESUS MAKES OUR FAITH COMPLETE (Hebrews 12:1–3)

Read Hebrews 12:1–3. What do these verses ask us to do?

Paul starts his list of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. Paul ends his list in Hebrews 12 with Jesus. In the same way, Paul ends his letter to the Hebrews with Jesus. (Paul also starts his letter with Jesus.) Jesus is the “ ‘one who is coming’ ” and who “ ‘will not be late’ ” (Hebrews 10:37, ERV). Jesus also “is the one who makes our faith complete” (Hebrews 12:2, ERV). This verse shows us that Jesus makes our faith in God possible. Jesus also is our perfect Example of what a life of faith is all about.

Jesus is the Pioneer of our faith in three ways:

First, Jesus is the only One who ran the “race” of faith and crossed the “finish line.” The other people on the list in Hebrews 11 did not fully finish the race because they did not get what God promised them (Hebrews 11:39, 40). After Jesus ran the race of faith on earth, Jesus went to heaven. He sat down on the right side of God the Father. We will join Jesus there in the future. The other heroes of faith Paul talks about in Hebrews 11 will be there, too (Revelation 20:4).

Second, the perfect life that Jesus lived made it possible for Bible heroes to run the race of faith (Hebrews 10:5–14). What if Jesus never came to this earth and ran the race of faith? Then no one can finish the race.

Third, Jesus is the reason for our faith. He showed us the love of God for sinners. God never stops trying to save us. That is why we will get our reward in the end. So, we must not give up. We must do what Jesus did. Jesus stayed patient and loyal to God. Jesus obeyed God in every way. Jesus did these things for us when we had no faith (2 Timothy 2:13). Our faith in Jesus really shows His love for us.

Jesus “is the one who makes our faith complete” (Hebrews 12:2, ERV) because He showed us how to run the race of faith. How did Jesus run? He gave up everything for us (Philippians 2:5–8). Jesus never sinned. He looked far ahead to the reward that waited for Him in the future. His reward will be the joy He gets from seeing people saved by His mercy. That is why Jesus put up with misunderstanding when He lived on this earth. That is why He accepted the shame of the cross (Hebrews 12:2, 3).

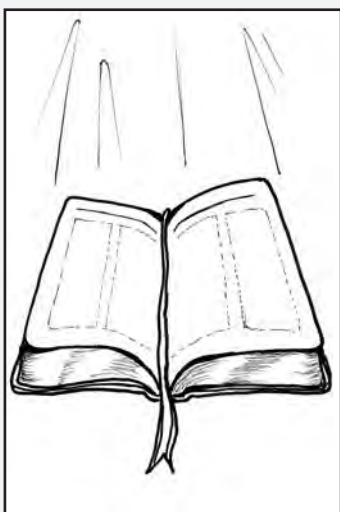


Jesus looked far ahead to the reward that waited for Him in the future.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “By faith you accepted Jesus. You belong to Him now. So, you also must grow in Him by faith. You grow by giving and taking. You must **give** everything to Him: your heart, your plans, your life. Give yourself to Jesus to obey all His commands. You also must **take** everything He offers you. You must take Him and His full blessing to live in your heart. He will be your strength. He will make you holy. He will be your Helper forever. He will help you to obey.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 70, adapted.

“God does not ask us to believe without first giving us enough proof for our faith. God gives us many reasons to trust Bible truth about Himself. But we can always choose to doubt. Our faith must rest on the proof God gives us. We should not trust our feelings to help us decide what we believe. People who wish to doubt will have the chance to doubt. People who really want to know Bible truth will find plenty of proof for their faith.

“Our minds can’t completely understand the love and works of our Everlasting God. He is the Holy One. He will forever be a mystery. The smartest person on this earth can’t solve this holy mystery. ‘ “Do you think you really understand God? Do you completely understand God All-Powerful? That knowledge is higher than the heavens and deeper than the place of death. So what can you do? How can you learn it all?” ’ Job 11:7, 8, [ERV].”—Page 105, adapted.



“People who really want to know Bible truth will find plenty of proof for their faith.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Paul tells us that “faith helps us understand” (Hebrews 11:3, ERV). What is the connection between faith and understanding? What exactly does faith help us understand?
- ② The Greek word “**pistis**” means “faith.” “**Pistis**” shows us (1) belief in God and (2) loyalty to Him. Why are both meanings important to our understanding about how we live “by faith”? How did the people in Hebrews 11 show their loyalty to God? How did their loyalty show their faith? How can we live as they lived?

“DO YOU WANT TO FOLLOW JESUS?”

Three years ago, your 13th Sabbath Offering helped to build a community center in the country of Cambodia. Cambodia is a country in the southeast part of Asia. There, people learn about the love of Jesus. This story is about how one man was saved because of the center. The surprising part of the story is that this man was saved before the center opened!

Sopaon hears that Adventists are building a new community center. The Adventists pay their workers well. So, Sopaon asks the manager Gary Rogers for a job. Gary does not have any jobs at the time. But Gary writes down the phone number of Sopaon.

Sopaon comes back a few months later. Gary learns that Sopaon knows how to do both brick and metal work. So, Gary tells Sopaon that he can start the next day.

“Why wait until tomorrow?” Sopaon says. “I can start now.”

Sopaon is a leader in his own Christian church. So, he already loves the Lord. He is surprised and happy to learn that Gary starts each workday with a 30-minute worship. Sopaon never worked anywhere that had morning worship. He likes it. Sopaon sees that the things Gary teaches from the Bible are different from what his church teaches. Gary teaches his workers about the seventh-day Sabbath. Sopaon reads in Luke 23 that Jesus dies on the 6th day of the week. Then Jesus is put in the grave before the sun sets for Sabbath. So, Jesus rests on the Sabbath day in the grave. Sopaon also learns that the followers of Jesus do not work on the Sabbath. Then the followers of Jesus wait until the first day to bring spices to put on the body of Jesus in His grave. Sopaon is surprised. “The seventh day is the real Sabbath!” he says to himself.

Gary sees that Sopaon believes the Bible truth about the Sabbath. So, Gary asks Sopaon, “Do you want to follow Jesus the way the Bible shows us?”

“Yes, I do,” he says.

“Then join us for Sabbath worship next Friday evening,” Gary says.

Sopaon is happy about the invitation to spend the Sabbath with Gary and the other Sabbath-keeping Christians. When Sopaon comes to the meeting, he is surprised when people greet each other by saying, “Happy Sabbath!” This special greeting makes him feel that God can make him holy.

Sopaon learns more and more about God. On Sabbath afternoons, Sopaon joins church members who help the needy. Sopaon is baptized 18 months after he starts work on the community center. Thank you for your 13th Sabbath Offering that helped to build this center in Battambang, Cambodia.

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



The followers of Jesus wait until the first day to bring spices to put on the body of Jesus in His grave.

