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# **They Still Speak**

## **HEBREWS 11:1-12:1**

### **Introduction**

1. There is a famous epitaph which has found its way onto many monuments and memorials throughout the English-speaking world.
2. It was written by an English classical scholar name John Maxwell Edmonds (1875-1958), and commemorates the fallen of the Battle of Kohima in April 1944.
3. This battle proved to be the turning point of the Japanese U-Go offensive in India in the Second World War.

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4. The epitaph reads **“When you go home, tell them of us and say, for their tomorrow, we gave our today.”**
5. Even in their death, these brave soldiers and many others like them, continue to speak to us today concerning great principles like duty, honor, commitment and sacrifice.
6. For those of us who are Christians these are not the only ones who speak to us from the grave.
7. In Hebrews 11, we find what has often been described as the “Great Hall of Faith.”
8. It is a list of those who set a great example of faith for us to follow.
9. The first person in the Bible to die was Abel.
10. In verse 4, of Hebrews 11, we read these words, “though he is dead, he still speaks.”
11. This is true of any person of faith.
  - a. Their death is not the end of them.
  - b. They still speak through their influence.

[Tonight, as we look closer at these heroes of faith who gave their today for our tomorrow, I would like for us to consider five attributes of their faith. The first is that . . .]

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## I. They Understood The Words Of Faith

### A. THE NATURE OF FAITH

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1, NASB95)

1. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (NKJV)
2. “Not faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (NIV84)
3. In other words, faith has to do with the way you and I see things.
4. It is being sure and certain about those hopes and realities which you and I have yet to see.

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### B. THE REQUIREMENT OF FAITH

“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6, NASB95)

1. Two men of faith are mentioned between the beginning of this chapter and this verse — Abel and Enoch.
  - a. Out of jealousy, Abel was killed by his brother Cain, but as the author points out, Abel “obtained the testimony that he was righteous” (v. 4).
  - b. Enoch, the second man, is recorded Genesis 5:22 as having walked with God for 300 years after he became the father of Methuselah.
  - c. Verse 5, here in Hebrews 11, tells us that Enoch “obtained the witness

that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.”

2. These men knew that God rewarded faith that is put into action.

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### C. THE DESIRE OF FAITH

“All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

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“And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.” (Hebrews 11:13–16, NASB95)

1. In the verses leading up to these, we read of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah.
2. Though each of these died without receiving the things promised, they could see them and welcome them from a distance through the eye of faith.
3. They had no desire to return to the country which they had left.
4. Instead, they were looking for a better country — a heavenly one, and a city there which their God prepared for them.
5. Likewise, neither you nor I have seen all that God has prepared for us.
6. It was the apostle Paul who wrote, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9, NIV84).
7. Still, we too, long for our heavenly home where, as we sing, “the saints of God will live on forevermore.”

[Not only did these heroes of faith understand the words of faith, . . . ]

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## II. They Undertook A Walk of Faith

### A. ABRAHAM

“By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8, NASB95)

1. Notice what the writer tells us about Abraham — when God called him, Abraham “obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance.”
2. What makes Abraham’s faith so demonstrative for us is the fact that “he went out, not knowing where he was going.”
3. Even when he arrived at the place to which God led him, we are told that he lived “like a stranger in a foreign country,” living in tents, never in a permanent home.
4. Why? “He was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10).
5. In the same way, Hebrews 13:14, teaches us that you and I “do not have a lasting city” here. No, “we are seeking the city which is to come.”
6. Abraham still speaks to us today telling us to keep looking for that eternal city which is yet to come.

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### B. MOSES

“By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.” (Hebrews 11:29, NASB95)

1. As you know, Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea.
2. God used a strong east wind to divide the waters of the sea creating a wall of water on their right and their left as they passed through (Exodus 14:21-

22).

3. The sea bed between the waters became dry ground so that the Israelites might pass through (Exodus 14:22).
4. When the Egyptians attempted to pursue, God caused the waters to return and thus destroyed Pharaoh's army (Exodus 14:28).
5. The example of Moses speaks to us today, saying, "even if the odds against you seem overwhelming, keep moving forward."

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### C. JOSHUA

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days." (Hebrews 11:30, NASB95)

1. The sixth chapter of the book of Joshua tells us of the defeat of Jericho and its people.
2. For six days Joshua, the priests of God and the army of Israel marched around the city one time each day, carrying the ark of the covenant and blowing seven trumpets of rams' horns (Joshua 6:3-4).
4. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times, and on the seventh time around, "when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city." (Joshua 6:16).
5. As you may remember, the walls fell flat and the army of Israel rushed in and conquered the city.
6. Today, Joshua speaks to us and says, "When it doesn't make sense, keep going."

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## III. They Accomplished Works of Faith

### A. NOAH

"By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the

world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

(Hebrews 11:7, NASB95)

1. Though Noah did not see evidence of an approaching flood, out of obedience to God, he built the ark through which he and his family, along with representatives of every kind of animal were saved from the flood.
2. When I was a boy, I thought Noah and his sons built the ark in a short amount of time.
3. I now understand that it took many years for the ark to be completed and enough foodstuff to be gathered and stored to sustain Noah’s family and all the animals until they could harvest crops again after the waters had subsided.
4. Through his example, Noah speaks to us tonight and says, “Though it is hard work and may take a lifetime, keep working.”

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### B. RAHAB

“By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.” (Hebrews 11:31, NASB95)

1. Rahab, as we read in Joshua 2, was the woman who hid the two spies which Joshua sent to spy out the land and the city of Jericho.
2. Her faith in the God of Israel and obedience to the spies command preserved not only her own life but the lives of her extended family when the Israelites destroyed the city.
3. Rahab still speaks to us today, reminding us, “Even though it involves great risk, be sure you are on the Lord’s side” (cf. Joshua 2:11).

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### C. OTHERS

“And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from

weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.”  
(Hebrews 11:32–34, NASB95)

1. The author of this letter simply ran out of room to include each and every person along with their exploits.
2. We do not have the time tonight to recount the exploits of each of those mentioned here.
3. What is it that these men of faith still say to us tonight?
4. It is that “Every victory in life, every accomplishment we achieve is given to us by God’s grace working through faith.”
5. Honestly, when I look at their lives, I consider my own faith to be small by comparison.

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## IV. They Withstood The Trials Of Faith

### A. NAMELESS OTHERS

“Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

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“They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.”  
(Hebrews 11:35–38, NASB95)

1. A fitting description is given to these nameless individuals.
2. It is found in verse 38 — they are referred to as “men of whom the world was not worthy.”
3. These were individuals who, according to verse 39, “having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised.”

4. They, according to verse 13, “died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance.”
5. Though dead, they still speak, and what they say is powerful: “When life goes bad, don’t give up. There is a better life coming.”

## Conclusion

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1. These people have become our witnesses of faith.
2. The writer of this letter uses them to encourage us. Notice the first verse in chapter 12:

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,” (Hebrews 12:1, NASB95)
3. It is as if we are in the stadium of life and these witnesses fill the seats.
4. As we run “the race that is set before us,” they encourage us to keep running.
5. They are the ones who tell us . . .
  - a. Remain “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” because “your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).
  - b. Don’t grow weary in doing good, because in due season you will reap if you don’t give up (Galatians 6:9).
  - c. If you fight the good fight, finish your course and keep the faith, the Lord, the righteous Judge will give you a crown of righteousness on the last day (2 Timothy 4:8).
6. Will you listen to these witnesses?