

# Acting in the Light of Unseen Things

*The Book of Hebrews*

By Chris Hand

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Hebrews 11:1-12  
**Preached on:** Sunday, August 9, 2020

**Crich Baptist Church**  
Market Place, Crich  
Derbyshire. DE4 5DD (UK)

**Website:** [www.crichbaptist.org](http://www.crichbaptist.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/crichbaptist](http://www.sermonaudio.com/crichbaptist)

Well, the passage we are looking at this evening is in Hebrews 11, and we're considering verses 1 through 7. It's going to be at somewhat breakneck speed. We could have a sermon on every name that occurs in Hebrews chapter 11. Quite comfortably one sermon on each name. But we are not going to proceed at that pace. We'll move a little more briskly than that and try to draw some more general points from what these different individuals are teaching us.

The title is this, "Acting in the Light of Unseen Things." Acting in the light of unseen things. And this, well, very famous chapter, isn't it? Very famous chapter in the entirety of scripture, let alone if we just consider its place here in the book of Hebrews. What indeed is this place? Where does it fit in? We've been looking, haven't we, at all the very detailed teaching about the tabernacle, and the various altars, and the priests, and what they represented, and how the Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of everything that those things dimly represented. They weren't the perfection. They were not the actual promise fulfilled. That awaited the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the writer has been saying, hasn't he, to who he is writing to, because they have begun to diminish the place of our Lord Jesus Christ. Began to refer back to the Old Covenant, things which now are passed and ceased to have the function that originally they had. They've now no longer needed, because the Lord Jesus had come, and yet they felt the pull, the draw back to them.

So, the writer here actually takes, if you like, Old Covenant people, people that pre-dated the giving of the covenant at Sinai, the patriarchs we call them, the elders as they are described here, and he said, "What can they teach us?" Let's look if we're going to be thinking, "Well, the Old Covenant has much to teach us," let's see what it does teach us. And he's basically saying, "It's not the things that you think its teaching us. It's teaching us actually about things that are in the New Covenant. Teaching us about Christ and the things that he has brought fully to light. Unseen things. Things that still lie ahead of us." That's the essence of what faith is here. We had a sermon a few months back on Hebrews 11:1. I am not going to repeat all of that ground that this is speaking about our hold, our being persuaded and convinced about the reality of things we can't presently see, whether they be the being of God, whether it be heaven or hell, whether it be the day of judgment. We haven't seen it. We haven't experienced it. But we have heard about it. It lies off in

the future as yet unexperienced by us. But we assert it to be true. And we say, even though we haven't seen heaven, and we haven't seen hell, we believe in these places. And though we haven't seen literally there the being of God, as if we could, we'd die if we did, whether we live in that sense by faith not by sight. We don't have the immediate person of the Lord Jesus Christ here with us.

We believe the record of scripture and everything that it teaches us and so, faith says, "Yes," and agrees with the reality of those things that lie ahead of us. Not yet here, but we believe one day will be here. One day there will be a day of judgment. One day there will be the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. One day we will see the reality of heaven, and others will see the reality of hell. And we will see the very things that we believe in now and that have an affect upon us now. And so, the writer is saying to these people he's writing to, really by way of rebuke, that actually there were people who didn't possess anything like the light that we have now that we have the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ before us. They didn't have that. That still was ahead for them. That was still an unrealized, an unseen reality. But look what they did in the light of it. How bold they were. How strong in their faith. How they didn't waver. How they kept going. Really, it's the same. Shouldn't you be the better now that you have got more light than them? That you can actually say, "We now know the great high priest is the Lord Jesus." We've seen the resurrection, and we know all about heaven, and hell, and judgment, and the day to come, because we have now this beautifully worked example of the Lord Jesus Christ. To assure us, they didn't have that back then. Abraham didn't have the actual reality there, but he believed it. So, the writer is saying, "Well, if they could live so courageously, so unhesitatingly for the glory of God, well, what does it say of us who have got more light, more knowledge, and we're wavering, and we're faltering, and we're falling away, and we're going backwards?"

So, he's taking Old Covenant examples, people who were living when, apparently, it was all meant to be happening as far as these people he is writing to are thinking. It's all there in Aaron or something. "No," he says, "But you can learn a lot from the lives of the people who were there. And what does it teach us? It teaches us about faith." That conviction, that being held, gripped by these realities that you believe are realities, even though, at the moment, you can't actually see them, that it is the substance of things hoped for, that things you are hoping for, looking in the future for, it's as if they are there. The very substance of them, the reality is as if it's there, and that evidence of things not seen is certainty about things that you presently can't see. And so, this is what is the essence of faith. Doing things, adjusting our behavior, in the light of those unseen things. That is faith. That is what faith does. Hold onto those things, reckons them as though present realities, real things that require a decision of us in the here and in the now. And that good testimony that it speaks about there in verse 2, the elders being the Old Covenant believers, but particularly those first names that we're going to come to this evening, they got a good testimony. God pleased with them. Pleased with their faith, because it was their faith, it was their belief that what God had said, God would surely, surely do.

Well, our first heading. "Promises from God." Promises from God. That's really what it's about it, isn't it? You can't see these things. You can't see them and touch them right now. But we believe them, because God has promised us they're real. God has promised us. The unseen God, but we've got beyond, as it were, kind of disbelief in his existence. We believe, as in his and that he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. So, what he has told us about heaven, what he's told us about life beyond the grave, what he's told us about himself, and I know if we trust in his Son that we go to heaven. We find that reality. Well, we believe those promises. Promises that God has made, and we account God to be true to his word, faithful. He's worth believing, because of what we know about him. And so, he speaks of judgment. And so, he speaks of these things that we believe in.

And you'll notice all around, indeed in the earlier chapter before this, chapter 10, about rewards and promises. God makes a promise, and that promise, well, you'll be rewarded if you believe it. You'll find heaven. You'll find the blessings of heaven. You can see in chapter 10, for instance, in verse 23, it talks there about a promise, promise of God. Or in verse 34 there is heaven as a reward of verse 35 of chapter 10. And again, the word promise comes in chapter 10 verse 36. But we can also see it, we had a few instances of it, and even though we're not preaching on this passage this evening, that will be a few weeks away, but in verse 11 this is Sarah. She judged him faithful who had promised. Promised! Promised she would have a child. So that woman there, and the writer sort of piles it on, doesn't he, he said there, "She was beyond the age in which she would bear a child, but she judged him faithful who had promised that she, even she in her old age, would have a child." Well, that's an unseen thing. Nobody sees anybody that age have a child. And she believed that she would. And she did. And that's because the promise she had believed.

And so, the promises from God, we see what he has given to us by way of promise, and we believe it. Like a child, isn't it? Well, a child trusts their parents, if their parents are prone to be trustworthy. Well, if the parent says, "Well, tomorrow, we are going to do such and such a thing as your birthday treat." Something like that, that's it! That's promised! That's as good as done. And well, hopefully, the child doesn't pester you anymore and say, "What am I doing on my birthday?" It's been promised. Then if that parent is trustworthy, it's as good as done. And they'll be settled, be calmer, about things, not feel so agitated. And that's where we are. We bring as it were, in faith, there's a promise of God. It's a settled matter. We're calm. We nod to it. We say, "Well, that's a settled matter. Matters are all cleared up. The deepest issues of life are all settled. It's all cleared up."

So, the great promise of God in Christ that your sin will be forgiven, well that is it! And that is where we rest, and that is where we cease from worry and cease from fear and torment, and we are assured. We are at rest. We are peaceful about it. We're not like these people here who are thinking about making some extra sacrifices there, or better kind of lean upon a bit of circumcision there to kind of make good, just in case this doesn't work. Something like that. Insurance policy. No insurance policy. It's an insult to

God. There's only one place you rest. In Christ. There by his blood shed, by his broken body, all you need. God-man offering up himself. All you need. No other sacrifice.

And it's wonderful, isn't it? Because it says this to us, "You remain forgiven through this life." So, each day that we awake, we are forgiven. We are still justified sinners. And we may still sin, and we do. And we may, in fact, have wretched thoughts come to us, doubting, unbelieving thoughts come to us. But we can confess them, and he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. We stay forgiven. And when that unseen, as yet invisible to our inspection, day of judgment comes, and that's our faith, isn't it? That when we come before the all-seeing eye of God, burning purity and excellence, which, really if we're thinking rightly, makes us tremble. But no, we don't tremble, because we know that we have an answer. We will be forgiven on that day, because of the sufficiency, and the wonder, and the weight, and the authority of what Christ has done. Forgiven sinners today will even be forgiven sinners on that day. That awesome day. And for the believer, a day in which opens up the heaven itself to us and takes us into that world beyond.

So, what we have before us in Christ's death and in his resurrection makes certain decisions. Makes us decide against certain things, like sin. Makes us willing to forgo certain things, advantages in this world. Because we are waiting for this better world, and we don't want to spoil our testimony. And we don't want to impair our fellowship with this great God who forgives sinners and who owns us to be his own on the day of judgment. We say, "Well, that's a wonder of wonders. I don't want to impair this. I don't want to spoil this relationship that I have with him. I want to walk in that." Because nothing spoils faith like sin. Nothing brings doubts and uncertainty into it like sin.

And so, in the light of what is unseen, we make decisions in the here and the now. And we accept losses, financial losses, losses to our reputation, losses in different ways. Losing our time. We could, many now, aren't they, or perhaps not so much now in pandemic time, but Sunday, "Well, I could actually be making some money today," or doing what you fancy today, and meeting out here, and drinking out there, and having a whale of a time, as the world would account it. We don't account it a whale of a time. We think, "That's sad! That's tragic! Losing a day! Losing this day!" The day you should be hearing God's word. The day in which he might have brought you to faith. And for us, as believers, building us up in the faith. I trust he is.

And so, we accept what the world would account to be loss. And we take insults. All kinds of reproaches, kinds of harsh words that may be said against Christians, and all kinds of caricatures, oh the things that people invent about us. It doesn't speak well, I am afraid, of some of these folk in America out there protesting about this and that and the other. That some of them are burning Bibles. It was out on the YouTube, or wherever it was the other day, burning Bibles. Well, if that's how they think Christians are in our book, and the God of that book, well we'll take that reproach. Well, we'll take that insult, because we look beyond all of that, and all the clamor, we're looking on to that day and believing that this book is worth far more than any other book ever can, will carry far more weight than any academic, or any other social justice activist, or anybody else that you could name.

So, we have this, and so we forgo present ease, comfort, pleasure. We let these things pass if these things are going to interfere with our faith, if they're going to somewhere inject loss of time, loss of energy that really should be just drawing instead upon Christ and having him foremost there. For we believe what it says in Hebrews 11:6 that he rewards those who do indeed diligently seek him. There's a reward in this. And that reward is heaven. That is to follow him, and believe in him, and trust him, and forgo the advantages, and preferments, and helps, and whatever it else might be that the world would give to us. "No," we say, "We don't want those. We want to follow God. That will be rewarding." We believe that. We believe that losses today are not losses at all. They are, in fact, they will be gains, because if we have a good testimony like the elders, if we have faith in God, that we've put aside the world, we're done with it, then we're the sort of people, in that way, that God is pleased with. It is impossible to please him without this faith, without this willingness to forego, to bear crosses and losses.

Now, we see this now a little further. My second heading, moving more briskly now, "Abel obeyed." Abel obeyed. We can but give a thumbnail sketch of these saints. They were saints back right at the beginning of our history. Second son of Adam and Eve, brother of Cain. And we read in Genesis 4, don't we, of the day that Cain in the passage of time when they both of them had been instructed to come and to make an offering. Well, that world that they lived in, we haven't time this evening to dwell upon creation in chapter 11 verse 3. There are invisible things that were brought into existence. Things that weren't there, and now they are there. And faith is seeing the same here with this. Well, we haven't seen what this world was before it was created, but there was nothing. What is that? Never seen or experienced that. Would be that God could create such a world. It came out of nothing.

And here is Abel living in that world, and here is the instruction. When you sacrifice, it must be a blood sacrifice. It must be a blood sacrifice. It's like in Hebrews, isn't it? Looking back to Leviticus and the blood of calves and goats. Well, yes, already, because blood needs to be offered before God as a recognition that the sinner, actually, their own life is forfeit. Really, they deserve judgment and death. But God is receiving from the worshipers hand the death of another. In this case, an animal. At least it should have been. That's what Abel gave, because he understood that. He understood that God would only be pleased, because God had already told them this, we would believe. God would only be pleased if it is a blood sacrifice, an animal sacrifice. And he is the keeper there of flocks, and so he brought one of his flock and offered that. And God accepted that. And he was declared to be righteous, in favor with him, in good standing in his sight, because he realized that he was a sinner, and that he needed grace.

Cain, however, did not. Did not feel that. He could have asked his brother for the flock, something to offer, something alive, something which had blood. He instead brought some of the produce of his. The ground produced quite favorably for him. His fear was afterwards when judged that it wouldn't. But anyway, he didn't bring what God required. And we think that God showed which sacrifice he was pleased with by sending fire down on Abel's sacrifice, but not upon Cain's. And that made Cain very angry, which wasn't a good reaction. He should rather have repented. Because God was pleased with the

obedience of Abel. Abel believed God. Believed God's word that God would be pleased with a blood sacrifice, not be pleased with any other kind of sacrifice.

And Abel reckoned that God was to be believed. That's it, isn't it? In faith, when we are acting in that way, we are actually saying that God is worth obeying. We obey him, because we know something about him. That he is reliable. That he is holy. That he is trustworthy. That he is serious. When he says something, he is serious about it. He is not joking with us. That when he says that that pleases him, then we believe that pleases him. And if he says that that does not please him, then we believe then that does not please him. That he is, there is something weighty about him, something worth believing and hearing from him, because of who he is. And that was where Abel got it right. He obeyed. And where Cain got it wrong. "I'll reckon I'll make up my own mind. Nobody tells me what to do. I will think it through for myself, thank you." But it is actually pride. But it is pride. "I'm not going to be told. I'm not going to listen to anybody else. I'm just going to do what I think I ought to do." And of course, he was wrong. He disobeyed, and he didn't reckon on God as being entitled to command. That God is the lawgiver, and his laws are not arbitrary. They come from his very being. That he is the holy God, an upright God, and a just God. A God who knows what's good for people and what behavior is bad and will destroy societies.

Well, Cain didn't believe any of that, and he paid the price in that way. Abel obeyed. Let me ask us, do we believe that God is worth obeying? That we have enough evidence to hand about the fact that he is serious, and that he is worthy. He's got authority. He's got the right to command. That's what Abel saw. May we see it too.

We're having to move quickly. There is Enoch next. Enoch. Well, there is just a handful of things that we read about him. And again though, there in the first book of the Bible, Genesis in just one chapter on from Abel. Now, I'm just going to read Genesis 5:21-24. "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Well, that's remarkable, isn't it there? There is Enoch. He believed. He walked with, and we'll come to that word in a minute. But he walked with the unseen God and believed in the unseen reality of heaven. He believed in it, believed it was there beyond the grave, and so, he lived, like people of that age, much, much longer than we do. He was rewarded, wasn't he? And that's where verse 6 follows straight on after Enoch. He was rewarded with an actual realization of heaven without dying. One moment, it was earth, and the next moment, it was heaven. And he just walked, as it were, one step from one place to the other seamlessly. And what he had looked for, longed for, believed in, was now an absolute reality in the twinkle of an eye. Translated, we would say. He was translated into the presence of God. Well, he walked with God. And there's the thing, isn't it? That's how you get to heaven. That's the sort of person that Enoch was, and, well, see what happened for him and the reward that he had and how much therefore we would want to walk as he did.

What is that walk? What does the Bible mean when it talks about a walk? Well, it's like a habit, a habitual way of life. Telling you, whether you walk with a limp, or whether you walk quickly, or slowly, or whatever else there, it's the kind of person that you are. What's your habit? What kind of things are you living for? What is your walk in that way? And, well, it is there, in Enoch's case, a walk of obedience, of faith, a life of prayer, right decision making. That's what you would see. That was his walk. If you were trying to sum him up, what's this man about? What are his habitual ways of talking, and thinking, and reasoning? You would understand that he loves God, and he values God above all else, and he is looking for heaven, and he thinks it's worth passing with life and everything here in order to get to that place. That's his walk. That is what his life is telling us.

So, it is a life organized around obeying God, adjusted to him, a life of repentance, of constantly refining how we think, how we behave, maturing our instincts, so that we become more like the one we serve, and ultimately, of course, that's the Lord Jesus Christ. Learning for his reward in order that God took him. Don't think alien abduction in this. Don't think any of the weird stories out there. That was just a natural process. One moment, conversing with God, living for his glory, conforming by obedience, making his walk, his habit of life to be one of glorifying God, and the next moment, he is in God's presence. He's into heaven, the place that he had longed for.

Funny thing is this, and we learn, well we can see where Genesis 5 is going. It's going to Genesis 6. We're going to the judgment. We're going to the flood. Things were not going well with the rest of the people of that day, and we read in Jude verses 14 and 15, right near the end of the Bible. Now from Genesis, we're going right to the penultimate book. So, in Jude 14 and in 15 where we read this now, "Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men," the men of his day, "also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'"

Well, he saw a lot by faith, didn't he? He could see the day of Christ's coming. He could foresee that. He was brought into the knowledge of that. He lived as a sage to be there in the presence of God, seeing there, as it were, the realization of it. But all around him there, well, there were these people, were they not? And what they were saying. Well, they had no love for God. They were ungodly. That's the word that keeps coming out of those verses. Ungodly. They were ungodly people. They are saying ungodly things, ungodly deeds committed in an ungodly way. Their walk was ungodly. That was the whole kind of style of their life, the whole habit of it and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. They didn't care. They really, really didn't care about him. Didn't think it worth thinking about him. Certainly not worth worshipping him or changing your behavior in the light of him. They just carried on being ungodly, and they thought, "Well, that's fine. Nothing is going to happen. Nothing is going to change. We just carry on in this way."

Well, we have to be careful, don't we, that we are more like Enoch, not like that world. Because his world looks suspiciously like our world in its ungodliness and all the harsh things that sinners have spoken against him, and we have plenty of harsh things, and seeing Bibles being burned, and such things in western culture tells us something is going wrong there. Something is going seriously, seriously wrong. Do we care about that? Are we part of the problem? Enoch certainly was part of the solution were they to have listened to him.

And finally, and very briefly, fourth heading. "Noah worked." As Enoch he walked, Noah worked. And we read of that, don't we, again in Hebrews 11 and his obedience. He was warned, wasn't he, of a judgment to come. That all the ungodliness that was there becoming more manifest in Enoch's day, God then called time upon it. Rapidly moving through big events, aren't we? But God here spoke time upon it, and he is going to bring a flood, the likes of which they've never seen. Indeed, we think perhaps rainfall the likes of which they hadn't seen this. What was this? What is going to happen here? An unseen event. Unseen judgment. We haven't seen the like of this before. And we're being told that this whole world is going to fall apart. And that Noah is also told somewhere within it all that the animals are going to be kept safe, and his household are going to be kept safe. How's that going to happen? He didn't have it all there at hand, but he got on busy working on the ark, huge, huge boat. It took one hundred and twenty years to build it. That was some enterprise. So much time that he had to get discouraged and to stop building it.

Over all of those years, his faith in this yet unseen judgment to come remained intact. You see, that's what it says in verse 7. "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen." Notice it hadn't happened. Nothing like this has ever happened, and why should it happen now, in one sense? Why believe now that it's going to be a cataclysm. It's going to be this disastrous flood. God is going to judge the earth. Sinners think he just goes on just as it's always gone on. There's really nothing to worry about here. Don't take it seriously. Well, they didn't take Noah seriously. They didn't take the ark seriously. They didn't take Noah's preaching. You read of him. He was a preacher of righteousness. They didn't take any of it seriously. Because there was Noah, he was divinely warned, and he warned others. He told them what was coming and why he was building the ark for one hundred and twenty years. Well, there he is moved with godly fear. This is his kind of walk, isn't it? Godly fear. He trusted God, walked humbly with God, submitted himself to what God had said, not what his senses were saying, not what the people were saying. What did he receive from God? And of course, who was right? Him or the people? Well, the flood came and answered that question perfectly.

2 Peter 2:4-5 we have something of this there. "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly." It goes on to talk about Sodom and Gomorrah. Well, we stand, don't we, really in the way of Noah. That we preach to an unresponsive generation. Well, they may look on what our building work here, and, quite so like the ark, we got scaffolding up. It's



occasioning some interest. So, the views we've had up on the scaffolding, the wrong kind of interest, but other people are looking, and watching, wondering. Oh, that they would realize what it's about. What is the aim here? What is our purpose here? Why do all of this? Well, this is it, isn't it? We want to serve God here. We want his word preached here. We want to see people converted here, children instructed here, because we value that. We've taken economic loss. We've suffered some mechanic disadvantage, because we believe in that, and that motivates us. And that inspires us and spurs us on. And so, there is Noah working. And we want to be like him. By faith working. We haven't seen the future, but we're still working, and we're trusting in God.

In the end, of course, the ungodly perish. The flood came. It was not a good place to be mocking Noah. Noah was saved. And he and his family, and they became the heirs of righteousness. Everything, fellowship with him, all of the things that come to those who God has forgiven, well, he received all of that, an abundance of life. So, it spurs us on, doesn't it, to keep focused. Keep our eyes on the unseen things. Keep our minds trained upon heaven itself. Keep preaching. Keep preaching these things. Some of you have many listening. Keep preaching these things, because these things please God in the end. Faith pleases God. He was pleased to save Noah and his household, pleased to own, as it were, what Noah had been saying, what he'd been preaching, pleased to accept what we do when we come here and worship here, and all the scaffolding, and all that's going on with that. God is pleased with faith, that we account God worthy. We account what he has said more important than what the world says, what it thinks is the good life and the best life. We say, "No, it's not. It's what he has said." We adjust our thinking. We adjust our behavior to fit in with that.

So, faith, acting in the light of unseen things, and here are these great examples from the Old Testament, and they're there for our instruction too. So may God help us to be Abel, and be like Enoch, be like Noah, be like these elders who obtained a good testimony from God, Amen.

