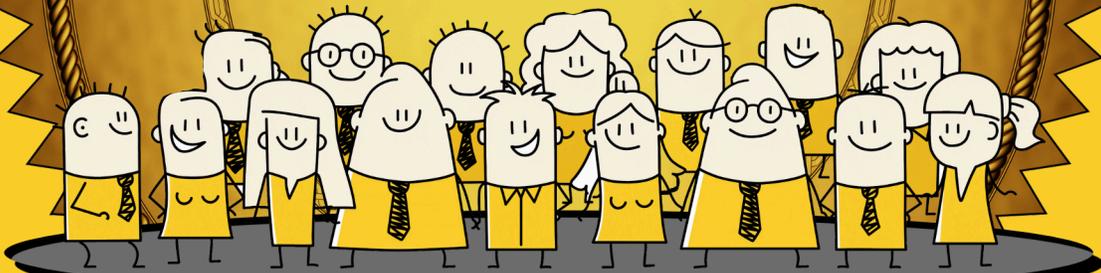


GOD IS OUR WITNESS

APPROVED OF GOD

**BUT WE ARE NOT OF THOSE WHO SHRINK
BACK AND ARE DESTROYED, BUT OF THOSE
WHO HAVE FAITH AND PRESERVE THEIR SOULS.**

(HEBREWS 10:39 ESV)



FAITH ... FOR BY IT THE MEN OF OLD GAINED APPROVAL.

(HEBREWS 11:2 LSB)

God is our witness. The approved of God are “of those who have faith” and who express that faith by living in reverential obedience to God in the present while having our minds set on the things above—the future hope and promises of God. As we draw near to God in reverential obedience the things that are yet future and unseen become more near and actual and reveal the context of the present reality in which we live. This is the powerful witness of God working in our lives providing further, compelling evidence that we are the approved of God—those who enter the rest of God and are welcomed into the holy places of God.

1. THE APPROVED OF GOD: God himself stands as witness on behalf of those who have saving faith, 11:1-2.

- (Hebrews 11:1–2 LSB) Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 **For by it the men of old gained approval.**
- A. By faith the Old Testament saints gained God’s approval.

In 11:2 we are told that the men of old gained approval. The term means to be approvingly testified of; to be or become affirmed favorably by firsthand authentication. The one giving witness here is God himself—he approvingly testifies and favorably affirms by firsthand authentication that we are approved in his sight.

The Greek word is **μαρτυρέω** [mar-too-reh-o/] ... and means to be a witness, to bear witness, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced.

- B. From days of old until present times saving faith has always been the only means of gaining God’s approval.
 - (Genesis 15:6 LSB) **Then he [Abram] believed in Yahweh; and He counted it to him as righteousness.**
 - (Romans 4:9b ESV) For we say **that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.**
 - (Romans 4:13 LSB) **For the promise to Abraham or to his seed** that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, **but through the righteousness of faith.**
- C. God’s witness about the men of old was that they believed in God and consequently obeyed him.
- D. This is God’s approval—God stands as witness and judge and testifies to our righteous standing based on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

- E. Those who are approved of God live with “other-worldly” assurance regarding the future—this is “the reality of what we hope for” as witnessed to us by the Spirit to our spirit.
- F. Our daily choices provide **evidence** of this present reality of the Spirit’s witness—**evidence** that we faithfully live in submission to the word and will of God in hope of things to come.
 - (Hebrews 11:1 NLT) **Faith shows the reality of what we hope for;** it is the **evidence** of things we cannot see.

2. THE APPROVED OF GOD: By faith we know the origins of our world, 11:3.

- (Hebrews 11:3 ESV) **By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God,** so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
 - A. **By faith we understand that God spoke the universe into existence.**
 - B. **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth in six literal days.**
 - (Genesis 1:1 LSB) **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**

In Genesis 1:3 God said, “Let there be light” and there was light. Nine times (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29) in Genesis “God said” and brought our world into existence out of nothing. Ex nihilo (Latin) means out of nothing or from nothing. **Our seen world was “not made out of things that are visible.”**

- (Exodus 20:11a LSB) **For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth,** the sea and all that is in them.
- (Psalm 33:6 LSB) **By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made,** And by the breath of His mouth all their host.
- C. Understanding the biblical teaching of the holiness of God helps us grasp this concept—that God is other than we are; that he is above us and superior to us in every way as the Uncreated One.
 - (Psalm 90:2 LSB) Before the mountains were born Or You brought forth the earth and the world, **Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.**
 - (Exodus 9:14 ESV) For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, **so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.**

- (Isaiah 46:9 ESV) Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.
- D. Understanding the holiness of God—his otherness—is a tremendous help for us as we seek to accept and live by his ways and thoughts.
- (Isaiah 55:8–9 LSB) “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares Yahweh. 9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.”
- E. Our faith grows in proportion to our increasing awareness that God knows all and sovereignly rules over all—the known and the unknown.
- F. Now ... by faith ... of course we believe that he spoke our world into being.
- G. “Shrink-to-fit”: The error of the intellectual processes of evolution is shrinking the thoughts of the infinite mind of God to fit tiny, finite, darkened categories of human understanding.

This is the fatal flaw of every form of evolution—not accepting what God says because it does not fit human comprehension. But, of course, it is beyond our comprehension. God is God and we are not. We choose to believe what he says about himself in the Bible or we choose to believe what is within our comprehension.

Basically we choose to believe God or ourselves.

- H. When humans insist on denying the clearly seen evidence of a Creator God, they will spiral further downward into futility and darkness.
- (Romans 1:20–21 LSB) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, both His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened.
- I. Implications: How can people understand the world in which they live if they are blind to the origins of this world and its Creator?

3. THE APPROVED OF GOD—God gives testimony of those who are righteous and pleasing to him with the examples of Abel and Enoch, 11:4-5.

- A. Abel believed God and was approved by God as being righteous, 11:4.
- (Hebrews 11:4 LSB) By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he was approved as being righteous—God approving his gifts—and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.
 - He offered a better sacrifice than Cain.
 - God gave witness—approving his gifts.
 - God gave witness to his righteousness and Abel still speaks 6,000 years later.
- B. By faith Enoch was approved as being pleasing to God, 11:5.
- (Hebrews 11:5 LSB) By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for prior to being taken up, he was approved as being pleasing to God.

4. THE APPROVED OF GOD—We are given a statement of fact and the example of Noah to emphasize a crucial truth concerning faith—that without faith it is impossible to please God, 11:6-7.

- (Hebrews 11:6–7 LSB) And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who draws near to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. 7 By faith Noah, being warned 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.
- A. The statement of fact is that without faith it is impossible to please God.
- B. The person who draws near to God in faith must believe that God is and believe that God is a rewarder of those who seek him.
- C. Noah’s example helps us to understand that without faith it is impossible to please God.
- D. Noah believed that God is.
- Noah lived in a world as the only person of whom it is stated that God found favor—an evil, God-denying world on the brink of judgment.
 - (Genesis 6:5–8 LSB) Then Yahweh saw that the evil of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And

Yahweh regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 And Yahweh said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I regret that I have made them.” 8 **But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.**

- ii. Noah showed that he believed God existed by receiving the warning of an unknown phenomenon that the world had never seen and would never see again—a worldwide flood.
 - (2 Peter 2:5 LSB) And did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, **when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.**
- iii. Noah obeyed all that God commanded in view of the warning and the coming judgment God.
 - (Genesis 6:22 LSB) **Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.**

E. Noah believed that God is a rewarder of those who seek him.

- i. Noah endured in faith looking with hope to God’s promise.
 - (Genesis 6:18 LSB) But **I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.**
- ii. Noah endured in faith (*probably took about 55-75 years to build the ark*) with the salvation of his family in mind.
- iii. The reality Noah lived in view of—the hope God offered him to save himself and his family—and **the work he did with that hope in mind were evidence of his faith.**
- iv. Noah was approved by God and an heir of righteousness because he believed God.

F. Noah was able to believe God for the unknown because of his reverence for God.

G. He lived in reverence to God—a reality in which God was beyond him and his ways were beyond him while at the same time trusting and obeying him in the moment.

YAHWEH IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE; YAHWEH’S THRONE IS IN HEAVEN.

(PSALM 11:4A LSB)

O YAHWEH, OUR LORD, HOW MAJESTIC IS YOUR NAME IN ALL THE EARTH!

(PSALM 8:9 LSB)

BUT YAHWEH IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE. LET ALL THE EARTH BE SILENT BEFORE HIM.

(HABAKKUK 2:20 LSB)

WORSHIP YAHWEH IN THE SPLENDOR OF HOLINESS; TREMBLE BEFORE HIM, ALL THE EARTH.

(PSALM 96:9 LSB)

LET ALL THE EARTH FEAR YAHWEH; LET ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD STAND IN AWE OF HIM.

(PSALM 33:8LSB)