

Walk by Faith – Faith Produces a Reward

7/15/18 – Pastor Randy

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.² For by it the people of old received their commendation.³ 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.

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Last week I took you on a quick journey through the first 10 chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews was written to be read publically to a group of Christians that were feeling pressure to turn back from their faith in Jesus and return to a more socially acceptable way of life. Their public profession of faith in Jesus had resulted in intense persecution. They needed a word that would encourage them to hold on to their confidence in the promises of God and remain faithful to the truth about Jesus that they had received some years earlier.

Throughout the first 10 chapters, the Holy Spirit inspired the human author – who is unknown to us – to encourage and challenge these Christians to persevere and stay strong in their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the source of their salvation. He motivated with warnings. He warned them of the fate of those who reject God's wonderful offer of salvation. He also motivated them by warning them about what they would miss out on if they were to give up.

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We need to be reminded that rejecting Jesus has horrific consequences – eternal torment. Rejecting Jesus also leads to forfeiting an eternal inheritance beyond our imagination. But the greatest reason for remaining faithful to Jesus is because of Who He is! The supremacy of Christ as the Son who radiates His father's glory, bears His Father's nature, and sustains all of creation by the power of His Word, is sufficient reason to stick with Jesus.

*So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised. "For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. **And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away.**" But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. **We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.***

In chapter 11, in order to encourage these Christians who were under the pressure of persecution, the author seeks to inspire them by running through a list of heroes of the faith from among their Jewish ancestors.

We all need examples that inspire us to press on and pursue the will of God in our lives. I have had many people inspire me to press on in my calling to serve God and His church. One such person is Dave Roeber. You can listen to his story [HERE](#). He suffered both persecution and isolation from other soldiers because of his faith after he was drafted to serve in Vietnam. He had a grenade explode right next to his face. I was fourteen years old when I first heard his story and I had already quit on God. His message never left me – specifically his words, "Don't tell me it is too hard to serve Christ!" It took three years for them to bear fruit but God used them to draw me back to Him and stir a determination in me to never quit on Christ again!!

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Before we look at some of the examples found in Hebrews 11 and others I want to begin by drawing your attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us about the nature and character of faith. He begins:

Now FAITH IS...

*the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.*

Faith creates in us a certainty about our hopes. It turns our hopes from “hope so” hopes to “know so” hopes. Faith gives us confidence that a future expectation will become a present reality.

Faith also makes the invisible visible. It is the conviction that certain things are true even though we are unable to experience those things through our five senses.

So FAITH IS... 1. A strong assurance or certainty about our **future reality**, and 2. A strong assurance or certainty about our **present reality** even though there is no tangible proof.

If you called me and asked me if my wife was with me and she was, I would not say, “I believe my wife is with me.” I would say, “Yes, she is with me.” I can look over and see her and so it isn’t by faith it is by sight. If she was not with me, but if she told me earlier that she would be home at that time, I might answer your question by saying, “I believe that she is home.” But because I trust her word so strongly I might just as well say, “She is home” with the same assurance as I would say, “She is with me.” This is why in 1 Corinthians Paul wrote, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

After the author explains what faith is he begins to show that faith produces something in the life of the one who possesses it by offering a series of examples that all begin with the words “by faith”.

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By faith we, by faith Abel, by faith Enoch, by faith Noah, by faith Abraham, by faith Isaac, by faith Jacob, by faith Joseph, by faith Moses.

The first thing Hebrews 11 says faith produces in us is understanding. By faith we understand that the world was created by a creator. It hasn't always been and it didn't come into being by accident.

Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every planet, every living thing in this cosmos and on the earth. ... That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact .

For the scientist that has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountain of ignorance. He is about to conquer the highest peak. As he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

~Robert Jastrow, leading NASA scientist in *God and the Astronomer*

But after this statement about faith producing the correct understanding about our world, almost every other "by faith" statement focuses on an action that was produced by a person's faith. The words "By faith" point to the product of faith. This series is entitled Walk by Faith. What is implied in this title is that faith walks; faith moves; faith acts; faith speaks; faith reaches; faith gives. Faith does something!

Abel offered a sacrifice by faith, Enoch pleased God by faith, Noah built an ark, Abraham obeyed and left his homeland, Abraham offered Isaac, Isaac blessed his sons, Jacob blessed his sons, Joseph gave instructions, Moses parents hid him, Moses refused Egyptian royalty, chose to associate with his people, left

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Egypt, kept the Passover. Joshua led a march around Jericho, Rahab protected the spies.

All of these people are examples of acting in obedience to a specific word from God that they trusted to be trustworthy, or by acting in accordance with something they believed to be true about God.

Abel and Enoch are examples of men who acted in a manner that was pleasing to God because of what they believed about God. God responded to their faith-inspired actions by blessing them.

Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses are examples of men who acted in obedience to specific commands with promises attached.

Joseph received a promise that was not tied specifically to any command, but his obedience to God was evidence of his faith in God and it was instrumental in him attaining the promise.

Rahab's faith was not in a promise she received from God yet it was triggered by what she had heard about God and led to actions based on that belief.

Their faith, demonstrated by their faithfulness to God's word, was rewarded by God. Sometimes the reward was promised and others times it wasn't.

1. The direction of our walk, and our destiny, is determined by our faith.

Actions reveal what we believe. Our actions tell on us. As kids we were concerned that our siblings might tell on us; revealing that we did what we said we didn't do - or vice versa. Maturity reveals to us that we ought to be more concerned about our own actions telling on us rather than others!

Should we tell others what we believe about God and His promises?

Absolutely! But we better make sure that we are not found to be false witnesses by a walk that reveals the opposite of our talk. We may, or may not speak about our faith, but we are never silent about our faith. Our walk will always bear witness to what we believe.

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Faith propels us on a path with a practical purpose. Faith is not a power by which we make blessings come to us; faith is a power that moves us to obey God and God responds by causing blessing to come through that obedience.

2. The faith that the Bible commends is faith IN God and His Word.

Faith according to scripture is not about trying to be positive; it is about trusting in God's promises.

We often equate having our faith strengthened with "feeling more confident". In other words, faith - or a lack of faith – is often associated with how we feel. But in the scripture, faith is evidenced more by action than feeling. Faith often produces action in rebellion against our feeling.

Faith as commended to us in the scripture always has God as the object. Our faith is not in the power of positive thinking. When that is the nature of our faith it becomes faith in ourselves, not in God. Our faith is in the power of our supremely loving, graciously good, always faithful and almighty God!

"We walk by faith and not by sight" does not mean that our trust in God is akin to taking a leap in the dark. It requires a step into the darkness because our faith in God's word provides us with a light at the end of the tunnel.

3. Faith in God followed by Faithfulness to God is always worth it!

In verse 13 we read, "These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar." And in verse 16, 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 for them a city. Those words were applied specifically to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob in respect to their failure to live to receive the promised land. They died before receiving the promise but they have received it now!

Neither did Abraham live to see the fulfillment of God's promise to bless the whole world through offspring. But in John 8:56 Jesus said, "***Your father***

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Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” They didn’t receive it while on earth but they have received it now!!

In verse 35, after listing inspiring examples of people of faith like Gideon, Daniel, Shadrach Meshach and Abednego, people who were victorious in impossible situations, he goes on to say, “others were tortured, suffered mocking, flogging, and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawn in two, killed with the sword. They were destitute, afflicted, mistreated. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised.” If you weren’t manic-depressive before you are now!

Here is the point: Even the greatest rewards for faithfulness here on earth, the most amazing earthly victories DO NOT COMPARE with what is to come. The reward for *faithfulness to God* that is motivated by *faith in God* is experienced partially here, on this side of eternity. Faith-inspired faithfulness will only be experienced fully and supremely in eternity when Jesus returns.

Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Peter Fleming, Roger Youderian, Ed McCully understood this. In 1950, a former missionary to Ecuador told Elliot about the Huaorani (or “Auca”) Indians, a small and fierce unreached people. He and his four missionary friends attempted to reach this group with the love of Christ and were killed by them before they barely had a chance to build a relationship. The amazing part of this story is that two of their wives continued their mission and saw almost this whole tribe come to faith in Christ.

Jim Elliot’s famous quote is, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose!”

Faith in God should inspire us to faithfully lay down our lives on earth for the blessing of others, while we look forward to our future home, a beautiful city whose designer and builder is God.

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