

(2 messages)

Title: WHAT IS FAITH? (An Understanding of Faith Part I)

TEXT: HEBREWS 11:1-3

Would you turn, please, to the book of Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 11. This chapter is often referred to as the "HALL OF FAME" in the Bible. It deals with the heroes of the faith. And the chapter gives us examples to follow in understanding the principles of faith. (Thom)

We are in the third section of the book of Hebrews. This section concern an application of chapter 1 through 10. How are we going to apply the great truths that we have been studying? ANSWER: THROUGH THE AVENUE OF FAITH.

Just see, It is by faith that everything that we experience as a believer is enjoyed. We walk by faith just as we received the Lord by faith. The Christian life is lived by faith. (A) So, we want to look, tonight, at the meaning and understanding of faith.

(HEBBREWS 11:1-3)

Prayer

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(1B) As we come to these verses of scripture, the first thing I believe we ought to do by way of introduction is define the word "FAITH"....

Many people believe that in Hebrews 11:1-3 we have a definition of the word "Faith". But, that isn't ~~necessarily~~ ^{true} so. And I will explain that in a moment. But, let's define the word "faith". WHAT IS FAITH?

(1C) First of all, faith is intellectual agreement to a set of facts.

That is, that you believe something that is actual so. You understand the facts and you accept them. And that is a must in order for you to have faith.

Faith is not wishing in the dark. If you have ever gone down a dark road as a kid and you kind-of hoped that no one would get you. That is not faith. But, some people act like that's faith. Some people believe that faith is merely hoping that something is going to be so.

When they are not sure it is or not. That is not faith, either. Faith is interllectual agreeing to certain facts.

(20) Secondly, faith is a definite response based upon a need.

You sense a need, and, therefore, you respond. You believe it. Because you know it will work for you. And you desperately need it in your own life.

(30) Third, faith is, also, a commitment on my part based upon a decision that I will make.

That is, I will decide to do something that will demonstrate that I really believe what I say I believe. And that is what is discussed in Hebrews chapter 11.

Hebrews 11 is the story of people who had faith. But, they proved their faith to us, by their actions. They made a decision. They did something. Their obedience ~~reflected~~ ^{proved} that they had faith.

Now, a lot of people think they have faith. But, they have never done anything about the faith they say they have. FAITH THAT IS REAL ALWAYS ACTS IN OBEDIENCE TO WHAT IT KNOWS GOD HAS PROMISED. Faith must act and respond if it is true saving faith. Otherwise, it is merely thinking something to be so without ever having experienced it. It is like believing something is so because you have read it. But, you have never applied it in your life.

For example: If you ask the average person: "Do you believe in ~~Christ~~ ^{Jesus}?".....The answer would be: "YES"....But, that doesn't mean they are saved. FAITH THAT IS REAL...ALWAYS ACTS IN OBEDIENCE TO WHAT IT KNOWS GOD HAS PROMISED. And Hebrews chapter 11 is really telling us what it is if you have faith. What it will be like in demonstration in your life and mine. There is much food here for the christian, if you want it.

So, let's look at the Scripture.....

2B Now (renew)
Let's come to Vs 1-3

(2B) In Verses 1 -3 there is a short explanation of faith .

The thing that I would like to point out is that these verses are not so much a definition of faith as they are a discription of what faith actual does. So, we do not have a definition here. But, we do have a clear discription of what faith actual does. The point is: that if faith is operating in your life, there will be results that will always be experienced....Let me try and break it down for you....

(1D) First of all, this explanation of faith is based upon the work of faith itself. To explain faith is to see how it works. And in Vs 1, we examine the work of faith. And faith does two things. It produces two things according to Vs 1 in the life of a christian.....

(1E) One, Faith produces an assurance of future blessings.

Faith produces an assurance in my heart of ~~future~~ blessings that I believe God is going to have for me in the future.....

Vs 1 says: "that faith is the substance of things hoped for."

The word "substance" literally means "something that is standing under".... Faith is not here said to be the real substance of what I am hoping for.... That is: I am not hoping for more faith in my life....Oh no....It is saying that faith is standing substance to the fact that what I do hope for in my life will really come to pass....

For example: I am not hoping that one day I will have faith.... And that then will get me into heaven....Oh no....I already have faith. And my faith gives substance, it stands under the things that I say I am hoping will come to pass..

Such ass....second coming of Christ....the resurrection of my body.. being with the Lord forever.....

Those concepts are future blessings for me. And faith in my life produces assurance of those things that I am hoping for.....

You see, a lot of folks don't have that assurance. How do we know we are going to be with God in heaven?.....How do we know that?.....

How do we know that we are going to have everlasting life?.....How do we know that we are going to see our body resurrected from the dead?...

ANSWER:.... NOT BY HUMAN REASON THAT IS FOR SURE...Oh, I could lay out all the philosophical reasons why christianity is better than the religions of the world in terms of futrue blessings and promises, etc.

But, that will not bring you assurance.....If you are lacking assurance of what is coming in the future, the answer is: ^{Believe} ~~FAITH~~ IN WHAT GOD HAS PREDICTED. And faith then will stand under you. It will give you assurance of what you are expecting to come in the future. And the big difference as to why people have assurance and seem at peace and why they don't is all related to faith. Faith in what God has already promised. You see, we need to believe God, raither than our own feelings.....

For example: I don't know about you, but the more you read the news paper, the more you listen to the news reports on T.V., and the more you know about what is going on in our world, it is rather discouraging isn't it? Have you noticed, laterly, how discouraging the news can be.

And you began thinking about all the great things God has promised. And you wander what is going to happen in this old world.

And then there are those folks who make all kinds of money with their charts and formulas about future events. And we become confussed....

~~*~~ What is the problem?.....Instead of having faith and confidence in God and His plan and what He has promised, we worry about our circumstances here on earth. FAITH GIVES ASSURANCE OF FUTRUE BELESSINGS THAT HAVE BEEN PROMISED TO US. FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE...IT STANDS UNDER US....

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~~(25)~~ Now, the second thing that the work of faith does in our life, it not only produces assurance of futrue blessings, but it, also, produces an acceptance of present realities that I can't see. Faith produces an ^{acceptance} ~~acceptance~~ of present realities that I can't see.

Vs 1 says: "It is the ^{assurance} ~~evidence~~ of things not seen."

The word ^{assurance} ~~"evidence"~~ refers "to the means of proof." The means of proof which results in a person being convinced of things not seen.....

According to the Bible Faith is the means by which God will prove to ~~me~~ that things ~~you~~ can't see, now, in this life, are really true.

And the little word "things" in Vs 1 gives us our word "pragmatic." Pragmatic refers to that which we are experiencing. So,....according to this phrase in Vs 1, the "things" that believers are experiencing which they don't see, HOW DO WE KNOW THEY REALLY EXIST? ANSWER: FAITH....Faith is the means to prove the point.

Now, ~~ask yourself~~ ^{let me ask you}....WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU ARE EXPERIENCING THAT YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN?.....Let me list some of them. *which are happening in my life*

- (1) One, the intercession of Christ on my behalf,
- (2) Two, forgiveness of sins.....
- (3) Three, spiritual growth
- (4) Fourth, access to God in Prayer
- (5) Peace in the midst of conflict.....and so forth.....

I have never seen any of that in the physical realm and therefore, conclude that it exist.

I witness to people. "You accept christ and all your sins will be forgiven."

Now, you try to prove that in a physical way. It is impossible. THEN WHY DO WE BELIEVE IT?.....FAITH.....Faith in what God says. And because of that faith, I have the assurance that it is so in my life.....

And so, these present realities that I am now experiencing the benefits of as a Christian, I experience them because of faith. AND I LEARN A GREAT TRUTH HERE. You know why a lot of people are living defeated lives as a Christian? Because they are not walking by faith. That is why.

They stop believing what God says. Now, we believe in order to have assurance about going to heaven. But, we stop believing it in our life. And therefore, the things we ought to experience...such as...spiritual growth, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life, assurance of my sins forgiven, victory over sin, lack of gossip in my life, all of that is related to faith according to the Bible.

Now, I cannot see those things, with my physical eyes. But, faith as confidence in God's Word will produce the means of proof to me that those things are real. WHY? Because I will experience them.

You know, I have often thought how amusing faith is. Have you ever gone to Romans chapter 6 and tried to get victory? It is an amazing chapter. Do you know what that chapter tells us? It tells us, first of all, that we ought to know that Christ died for our sins and that He arose from the dead and that He is alive, right now. ..WELL, I ALREADY KNOW THAT. But, the chapter begins that way and tells me that I ought to remember those facts.

And then the chapter goes on to tell me how I should apply those facts to my life. Romans 6:11 says "Just think it to be so. That, you died to sin and now you are alive to God." "JUst think it to be so.

But, here I am with sin in my life. I know there is sin in my life. Yet, Romans 6:11 tells me to just think that I am dead to sin, and alive to God.

You see, it is just a matter of faith. Believe that you are identified ~~with~~ with Christ when he died..that you are crucified with Him..that your old sin nature was nailed to that cross, and you don't have to be a slave to sin anymore. Just believe that. NOW, I TELL YOU THAT I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT. Do you know why? Because I see sin in my life. *Jodi Hester*

And so, I look at that and it says..

"Hay, believe that...just think it to be so." But there is a lot of sin in my life, I still sin. So, how can that be so?

And you know, as long as I think that. I will not have victory. But, as soon as ^{I BELIEVE} ~~I believe~~ what God says, then I will have the victory. And that is true in your life.

You ask, "Isn't that a paradox?" No! for I tell you that is things we cannot see. And faith is the assurance or the means of proof to us that we will experience what we cannot see in our lives. As long as you think it is not true, you will not have victory. But, as soon as you start believing it is true, you will have victory. Faith is beleiving what God say exists.

For example: take the ministry of the Holy Spirit in your life. Do you really believe that you are indwelled by the Holy Spirit? I mean...do you really believe that?...Well, if you don't, then you will never experience the blessings of the Holy Spirit's ministry. But, if you do believe and you act upon that belief, then you know what I am talking about. WHY? Because you are experienceing His ministry in your life. Faith is the means of proof ..or. the assurance to me that this experience of the Holy Spirit living in my life really exist.

So, you see, if I don't have faith in what God says is true, what do you suppose is the result? I don't experience the beneifits of what that Spiritual reality is...And I become a discouraged, defeated christian.

You see, a lot of christians are letting that control their ability to believe God. So, we sit here and say, "Well, yes, I believe it by fact, ^{that} Holy Spirit in me, but whose is experienceing it. I mean, I do what I do, and God has given me a brain to use, but I don't really know anything about this so called power of the Holy Spirit and all of that other stuff.

Part of the problem in that attitude is that we continue to not believe what the Word of God says. And as a result we never experience that spiritual reality. Dear friends, it is as simple as that.

Faith is the means of proof to you and to me of the present realities of the Christian life that I cannot see with my physical eyes. But, I know they exist and they are real because of faith and nothing else.

SHALL WE CLOSE IN PRAYER