

Sunday Morning Message

October 15, 2017

Examples of Great Faith

Text for Today's Message – Hebrews 11:4-5; 7-12; 17-31

Congregational Reading – Hebrews 11:4 – 6

Introduction

Today, we will continue the discussion of faith that was begun last week. We enter into a life of faith when we were saved, but if our life with the Lord is to abound and be fruitful, our faith must increase. (Read Hebrews 11:1 – 3; 6)

The purpose of this series of messages is to help us understand what faith is by definition, and also to determine whether or not we have experienced "saving faith". I also want to encourage all of us to walk by faith in this life to a greater extent; to draw closer to God by faith; and, to accomplish greater things for the Lord through our increased level of faith.

Illustration - What Does It Mean to Believe?

Many years ago, when John G. Paton first went out as a pioneer missionary to the new Hebrides Islands, he found that the natives among whom he began to work had no way of writing their language. He began to learn it and in time began to work on a translation of the Bible for them. Soon he discovered that they had no word for "faith."

This was serious, of course, for a person can hardly translate the Bible without it. One day he went on a hunt with one of the natives. They shot a large deer in the course of the hunt, and tying its legs together and supporting it on a pole, laboriously trekked back down the mountain path to Paton's home near the seashore. As they reached the veranda both men threw the deer down, and the native immediately flopped into one of the deck chairs that stood on the porch exclaiming, "My, it is good to stretch yourself out here and rest." Paton immediately jumped to his feet and recorded the phrase. In his final translation of the New Testament this was the word used to convey the idea of trust, faith, and belief.

"Stretch yourself out on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Illustration - Saving Faith

Phillips Brooks defined faith by saying, "Faith means Forsaking All, I Take Him." Saving faith is leaving the spot where we are now standing and jumping into the arms of Jesus with full confidence that He is able to bear us up. It is like trying to swim. Swimming is work as we know. Before we can swim, we must believe that the water is able to bear us

up; saving faith is believing on the Lord Jesus Christ first and then swimming in the great sea of His love and everlasting mercy. This is a faith that saves.

We began our discussion of faith last week by explaining what faith is. We attempted to define faith. We saw that God is the one that initiates faith. He does this through the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and oftentimes a Soul Winner. God also reveals Himself through Creation, and through the Law that is written on all of our hearts.

We also learned that it is through faith that we receive the grace that saves us and justifies us. We learned about the Lord Jesus from the Word of God, and we placed our faith in Him alone for our salvation. We also saw faith can be increased through the exercise and application of what is taught in the Word.

We found out that it is faith that pleases God and we also discovered that faith will always produce works. Lastly, we saw that those who have lived by faith often were persecuted.

This morning, we will look at some examples of faith from the Bible.

Read Hebrews 11:4 – 5; 7 – 12; 17 - 31

Introduction to Today's Message

Today's message dealing with examples of faith will allow us to see how the concept of faith worked in the lives of some of the great men and women in the Bible. The people discussed here in Hebrews 11 are examples of the "great faith" that our Lord expects us to have while we are here on this earth. Our faith may not be expressed in the same ways; we will most likely not be called upon to build arks or hide spies, but we will be called upon to do things that, humanly speaking, make absolutely no sense. At these times, we must lean on our faith and remember that we are not alone. In fact, according to Hebrews 12, the people we will examine today are the very people who are now observing us as part of a "great cloud of witnesses"

I The Origin of Faith

If we were to go back and study in the Old Testament all of the people that are mentioned very briefly here in Hebrews 11, we would discover that in each case there was a definite time where faith began in each of their lives. Each of these men and women had a time when their faith in God began. These people were not born with faith. These people did not receive faith from their parents: they may have observed the faith of their parents, but the faith of the parents does not automatically transfer to the child. (Note: Parent: you cannot believe for your child; Child: you do not have faith simply because mom and dad do.)

Faith begins with God

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)

As we have already seen, God used the Cross to draw us to faith. He also uses the Bible, and the soul winner. He uses Creation, and the Law that is written upon every man's heart.

In each of the examples of faith in Hebrews 11, we see that God came to each individual and presented Himself to them; and in each of these cases the individual placed their faith in God. But, there was a definite origin or beginning to their faith in God. This profession of faith was then tested to determine its validity.

For Example – Abraham

There came a time when God called upon Abraham to move away from his home town (Ur of the Chaldees), away from most of his family, and away from his culture. Now this may not have been the beginning of Abraham's faith, but his faith was certainly tested here.

Later, Abraham was called upon to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice to God. That was certainly a great test of Abraham's faith.

Today, faith comes through the Word of God - The Bible

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

- A The Word may come through a person
- B The Word may come through a church service
- C The Word may come through a personal reading of the Scriptures

Faith originates when God comes to you and presents himself through the person of Jesus Christ. You are then called upon to choose whether or not Jesus Christ is, in fact, God and that His shed blood on the cross of Calvary is really all that is required for your entrance into Heaven. You are given a choice to trust in Him and in Him alone for your eternal destiny, or to continue to believe whatever it is you have always believed. (i.e. church membership; baptism; good works; whatever).

Faith will eventually require or produce a profession. We must be careful here because professions often can come with no real faith. But, a profession will often be the first test of faith. Baptism is a test of faith and is a type of profession. But, these are merely the beginnings of a life of faith. Once the seed of faith has sprouted it must grow, and in order for it to grow it must be nurtured, watered, protected, and fed. But, it definitely has an origin, a beginning. This is what we call the new birth.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

Illustration - That Is Faith

A skeptical physician said to his Christian patient, "I could never understand saving faith. I believe in God and I suppose I believe in Jesus Christ-I am not conscious of any doubts. I believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and I believe in the Bible, yet I am not saved, I do not feel God near me. What is the matter with me?" "Well," said the patient, "a week ago I believed in you as a very skillful physician. I believed that if I put myself in your hands I would recover from my illness. In other words, I trusted you. For a week now I have been taking some mysterious stuff out of a bottle. I don't know what it is; I don't understand it, but I am trusting in you. Now, whenever a person turns to the Lord Jesus Christ and says, 'Lord Jesus, Christianity seems to me to be full of mysteries. I do not understand them, but I believe Thou art trustworthy and I trust Thee; I commit myself to Thee,' that is faith. A very simple thing, isn't it?" The faith of the patient did not heal him; it was the remedy that healed him; but in faith he took the remedy.

Has there been an origin to your faith?

Has God presented Himself to you through His Word as He did to Abraham and Noah and Enoch and Rahab and all of the other examples?

Have you in fact received Jesus Christ, the God man, as your Savior; and been born-again through faith in Him?

II Operation of Faith

A Seen in Abel's Offering to God (v.4)

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. (Hebrews 9:22)

B Seen in Enoch's Oneness with God (v.5)

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. (Genesis 5:24)

C Seen in the Obedience of All

If ye love me, keep my commandments. (John 14:15)

1 Noah (v.7)

2 Abraham & Sarah (vs. 8 – 11; 17 – 19)

3 Isaac (v. 20)

- 4 Jacob (v. 21)
- 5 Joseph (v. 22)
- 6 Moses (vs. 23 – 30)
- 7 Rahab (v. 31)

Illustration - Proven Faith

A grocer was down in the cellar of his shop when he noticed his small son standing at the edge of the open trap door. He called up, "Here I am, Sonny, jump down." But the boy hesitated. "I can't, Daddy; I can't see you." Up came the answer, "No, but I can see you; trust me and jump, and I will catch you." At this point, the boy jumped because he trusted his father.

God will often call upon you and I to "jump" in faith. He will bring situations into our life where we will be called upon to trust Him. These trials and tests that God brings us into will increase our faith, if we keep our focus on the Lord.

III Ongoing Faith (vv. 13 – 16)

Illustration - Divine Spectacle

A gentleman having an appointment to meet President Lincoln at five o'clock in the morning went a quarter of an hour before the time appointed. While waiting for the appointed time he heard in the next room a voice as if in grave conversation, and asked an attendant standing by, "Who is talking in the next room?" "It is the President, sir," replied the attendant. "Is anybody with him?" the gentleman inquired. "No; he is reading the Bible." "Is that his habit so early in the morning?" "Yes, sir, he spends every morning from four o'clock to five in reading the Scriptures and praying."

Faith in God is ongoing – it continues throughout your life, regardless of whether you ever see a visible manifestation of God's presence. These great men and women in the Bible, and the great men and women of faith that have lived since the time of the Bible have all look beyond life to a time and a place where God will make all things new and right. They saw, through faith, what God has prepared for them, and they trusted in God throughout their entire lives.

Genuine faith is ongoing. It continues. It may waver at times, especially during times of trial, but it always endures.

Paul said, *"I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."*

Conclusion

Sometimes lost people will make fun of you because of your life of faith, but don't worry about them. Someday, you will know that your faith in God was not in vain, and they will see it too.

Illustration - Operative Faith

A Christian farmer was constantly jeered at by a non-Christian because he would not work on Sunday, and because he went to church, and gave his tithes to the Lord's work. At the end of a poor harvest season the non-Christian said to him, "Where is your God? He has certainly failed you, hasn't He?" "Oh, no," the Christian said, "my God does not close His books at the end of the harvest season."

God will probably not fix all of the problems of this world in your lifetime, but He is working diligently toward that day when Christ will appear in all His glory, the devil will be defeated, and evil will be removed once and for all.

Do you believe that? Have you placed your faith in the Lord Jesus?

Are you trusting in Him for your eternal destiny? Is Your Life in His Hands?