

Living by Faith

Hebrews 11: 1-3; 6

Today we are celebrating Mother's Day. I think it would be safe to say that most of us are very thankful for our mother. I know my life has been influenced greatly and richly blessed by my mother. The Lord has given me a faithful and loving wife, who has been a wonderful mother to our girls. No doubt all our lives have been enriched by godly women who loved and invested in us.

There are many attributes that we could consider when thinking of the godly women who influenced our lives. As I pondered my mother, and others whom God has allowed me to know over the years, one attribute that seemed evident in all of these women's lives was faith. There is something about the quiet, gentle faith of a mother. Often times her work was done in the background, faithfully serving behind the scenes; but, she always had time to calm our fears and tenderly deal with our hurts. She didn't always have an answer for every problem we faced, but she had a confident faith that God would work it out according to His divine will, within His time. Such faith encouraged and challenged my walk with the Lord.

As we celebrate our mothers, and the faith many of them possessed, I want to look at the [elements](#) of faith described in our text. I hope this passage will challenge our walk with the Lord and increase our faith in Him. I want to preach on the thought: [Living by Faith](#).

I. The Definition of Faith (1) – [Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen](#). Faith is a topic that is dealt with extensively in the Bible. It is found over two hundred times throughout Scripture. In our text we are given the definition for faith – the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Many view faith as something that is mystic and elusive, something that we talk about, but have difficulty defining or really grasping. Hopefully a more in depth look at this definition will help us better understand faith.

- The word *substance* in the text means "*the foundation, assurance, or guarantee.*" It was a legal term that spoke of a document that revealed ownership of a piece of property. We would refer to it today as a title deed. Faith is the foundation, the assured guarantee, the title deed to things hoped for!
- The word *evidence* speaks of "*proof or conviction.*" Faith is the proof or conviction of the existence of things not seen. The world looks upon our faith and demands further proof. Faith accepts the truths of God as the proof; faith provides the conviction and assurance of the promises of God. We would do no injustice to the text to define faith as – The assured guarantee of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Consider the thoughts of some Bible scholars regarding the definition of faith:

"Faith means that we are certain of the things we hope for, convinced of the things we do not see" (William Barclay).

"Faith is a hope that is absolutely certain that what it believes is true, and that what it expects will come" (Barclay says this is what faith is to the writer of Hebrews).

"Faith is trust in the unseen. It is not trust in the unknown, for we may know by faith what we cannot see with the eye" (Wycliffe Bible Commentary).

"Faith apprehends as a real fact what is not revealed to the senses. It rests on the fact, acts upon it, and is upheld by it in the face of all that seems to contradict it.

Faith is a real seeing" (Marvin Vincent).ⁱ

- The POSB Commentary defines faith as – the substance, the actual possession, of things hoped for, the evidence and reality of things not seen. It is *both an act and a possession* of the thing believed.ⁱⁱ Genuine faith rests in the providence and sovereignty of God, holding faith in higher esteem than those tangible things we can hold in our hands. Genuine faith is more absolute and certain than that which is seen, held, and felt.

II. The Recognition by Faith (2) – *For by it the elders obtained a good report.* The Hebrew writer declared that by faith the elders, those who walked with God prior to the provision on Calvary, obtained a good report. These were pleasing to God and found acceptable to Him through faith. The remainder of this chapter is considered by many as the Hall of Faith. It deals at length with the faith of certain individuals. These were not approved of God by keeping the law or specific ordinances; they obtained a good report by their faith in God. They willingly walked away from the world, abandoning the lusts and pleasure of the flesh, to follow God by faith. They were justified by faith, the same as we are today! Being acceptable to God has always been obtained through faith. *James 2:23 – And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.* Abraham was declared righteous by God because he believed God; his faith secured acceptance to God, being justified by Him. We must acknowledge the importance of faith today as well. *Eph.2:8-9 – For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*^[9] *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

- Faith is an essential element in salvation, but it is not limited to salvation. God is pleased when we respond to the offer of salvation by grace through faith, but He also expects us to maintain our faith as we walk with Him, maturing in our relationship with Him. Faith enables us to endure the difficulties we face and strengthens us for the journey. *2 Cor.5:6-7 – Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:*^[7] *(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)* Heb.11:9-10 – *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:*^[10] *For he*

looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God. Heb.11:17, 19 – By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ^[19] Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. Heb.11:24-26 – By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; ^[25] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; ^[26] Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith these pleased God, looking through eyes of faith to something far greater than what they experienced at that moment. Faith honored God and God honored faith!

III. The Illumination through Faith (3) – Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. You must bear in mind that these words were divinely inspired nearly two thousand years ago. At that time, they didn't have the benefit of space travel and satellites to reveal the wonder and majesty of creation like we have today. They could see the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, but they did not have the benefit of billions of dollars of research and confirmation. I love the simplicity of this statement, and of faith itself. Through faith the believer understands, without doubt or question, that God created this vast universe by the Word of His mouth. The things that we experience in this life, all of creation itself, was formed by one who is invisible. The Sovereign of the Ages spoke it all into being, and that is believed and received by faith!

- I am not a scientist. I can't begin to explain the complexities of the human body, the vastness of the galaxies, the orbit of the planets, the molecular structure of DNA, but I know the one who created it all. Through faith I embrace, without doubt, a sovereign Creator who orchestrated all of this and keeps it in order according to His divine plan. Faith doesn't always require explanation or physical evidence; faith stands alone as all the evidence necessary. If He were a God who could be defined and figured out, He would not be worthy of our worship. He is far greater and majestic than we can imagine, but I trust Him by faith.
- I can't explain why a holy, sinless God would be willing to adorn a robe of flesh and come to earth to live in poverty, suffer ridicule and rejection, and die as the substitutionary atonement for sin, but by faith I believe it! I can't fully explain all that transpires as the Lord takes a sinful heart of flesh and transforms it by His grace unto salvation, but by faith I received it! I can't begin to fathom an eternity in heaven, free from sin and the cares of life, but by faith I know the Lord has gone away to prepare a place for us. He will come again and receive us unto Himself, just as He promised, to inhabit a mansion He has prepared for us! Oh, the world may think I am foolish to believe, but I am settled in my faith and certain of my salvation. I can't hold it in my hand and show it to you physically, but my faith is more certain than anything in this life!

IV. The Expectation for Faith (6) – But without faith *it is impossible to please him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. This statement declares that we cannot possibly please God apart from faith. Those who come to God, being received by Him, must believe by faith that He exists, and that He is the source of all blessing for those who seek Him.

- This does not refer to a casual faith, or one that comes and goes. It speaks of a living and active faith in God. Such faith compels obedience and desires communion with the Lord. One cannot possess genuine faith apart from fellowship with Christ. While works are not the source of our salvation or our faith, they will be evident in the lives of those who possess faith. Our faith will guide and dictate our lives. Genuine faith cannot be hidden; it will reveal itself in our words and our deeds. Our lives are shaped by the faith we possess. If you want to please God, enjoying His hand of provision and guidance in your life, exhibit faith in Him. It is impossible to please God apart from faith, but by faith we are assured His goodness and grace. *John 6:28-29 – Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* ^[29] *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

Conclusion: I hope we all have a better understanding of faith and a greater appreciation for its benefit in our lives. Faith is the assured guarantee of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. By faith we see beyond our current circumstances to the glorious future prepared for us. By faith we embrace the power and majesty of our Creator and Redeemer. By active, living faith we honor and please the God we serve.

Where is your faith today? Is it strong and enduring or weak and lacking? *Mark 9:23-24 – Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* ^[24] *And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* If your faith is weak, seek the Lord for strengthened faith. Maybe you have yet to put your faith in the Lord unto salvation. You will never be able to explain it all, but child-like faith in the finished work of Christ leads to salvation. Come in repentance of sin and faith unto salvation!

ⁱ Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Hebrew, James.

ⁱⁱ Ibid