

Faith is ...¹

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

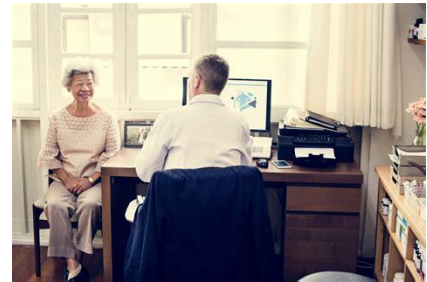
August 14, 2022

Text: Hebrews 11:1-3

Purpose: We are called to operate our lives through faith. The character of faith causes us to have a certainty concerning our future. It is verified by the word of God. Faith causes us to put it into action and trust what God has promised. Faith leads us to a greater understanding and in turn enables us to persevere.

Upon retiring, a woman decides to get a physical. The doctor asked her how she was doing, so with a sigh, she reported a litany of symptoms - this aches, that's stiff, I'm not as quick as I used to be, and so on.

He responded with, "You have to expect things to start deteriorating. After all, who wants to live to be a hundred?"



She looked him straight in the eye and replied, "Anyone who's ninety-nine."²

This morning I wanted us to continue on in the Book of Hebrews. If you were here last week, you may remember that I was very dogmatic about the perils of apostasy. Apostasy is the deliberate turning away from the only way of salvation offered by God. When someone continually rejects the message of salvation offered through Christ, they are grieving the Holy Spirit. When they do that, they are removing the only way of salvation offered by God. This loud warning by the writer of Hebrews was given to awaken the dull hearing and hard heart of those that have heard the message of salvation but have become inoculated against its changing, transforming power.

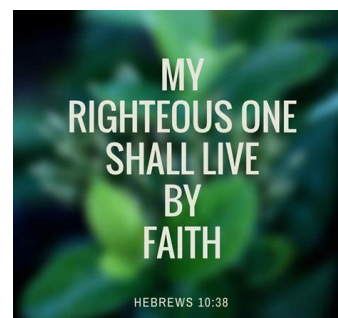


In the last eight verses in chapter ten, the writer of Hebrews wanted that small house church to remember that they had not given up their faith in the midst of persecution. Many, I am sure, were tortured, beaten, tormented, but they never relented in their faith in God. They didn't give up when times got hard. The writer of Hebrews wanted them to remain faithful until the very end. He wanted them to know that their faithfulness was not in vain. That God would reward those that had stood fast to their prior confession in Christ. They were the kind of people that stood fast while all the others were fleeing.



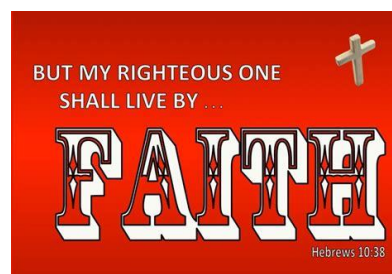
Today church, I want you to know your faithfulness has not been in vain. This church has been faithful, and it is my prayer, we will trust God more and demonstrate our faith in God by taking tangible steps of faith as we move into the future.

The heart of Hebrews 10: 32-39 is a message of “Keep On!” It was a process of remembering their prior confession. It was a confident response to their present situation. As it says in Hebrews 10:38, “*My righteous one will live by faith.*”



Repeatedly in the New Testament, we are encouraged not to give up our faith. To hold fast to our calling in Christ Jesus – remain true – persevere. So many Christians start out great, but fizzle out. Where are the confessors of faith in our church? Where are the ones that have said they believe in God, they love His church, will they remain true to their faith? Our church rolls are filled with confessors that have not darkened the doors of this church in years. We have been warned in the scriptures this would be so. Why should this come as a surprise to us?

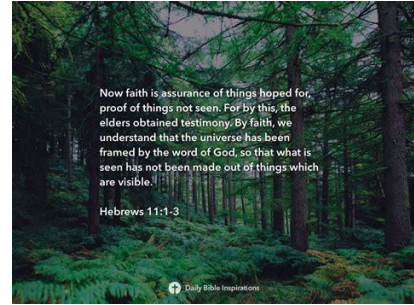
Hebrews says, “*My righteous one will live by faith.*” If you are a sincere believer in Christ, then you **will live by faith.** You will **persevere until the end.** You may stumble, you may fail, **but you will be found faithful until the end.** That is where we are in this journey of life – walking by faith.



But what exactly is faith and what does it look like?

That is where Hebrews 11 comes into focus. Hebrews 11:1-3 says,

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understood that the universe was formed by God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was invisible.”



As believers we have hope in the sure foundation of Jesus Christ.

There is a story of a man that had reached the end of his rope and decided to jump off the Golden Gate bridge. A policeman caught him by the collar and pulled him back. The man said, “You don’t understand how miserable I am and how hopeless my life is. Please let me jump.”



The kind hearted policeman said, “I will tell you what. I will give you five minutes to tell me why you want to die. You give me five minutes to tell you why you should not do it. At the end, if you still want to jump, I will not stop you.”

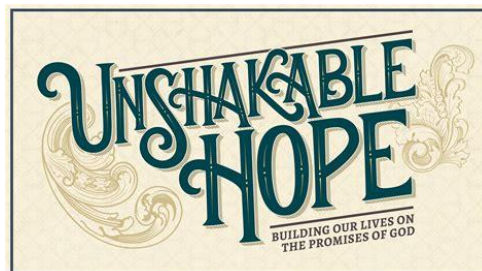
The man took his five minutes and the policeman took his five minutes. At the end, they both stepped up to the edge of the bridge and they both jumped!

As sad as that sounds, many in today’s society have abandoned the moral compass of God’s word for the raging self centered secularism of today. Today our society is willing to sacrifice life on the altar of convenience. We have abandoned what God’s word says on marriage and opened the door to a whole host of other arrangement possibilities. The world does not have a foundation upon which they can base the decisions in their life so they are basing it solely upon their hedonistic desires and passions. No wonder the world wants to jump off the bridge.

**WITHOUT A MORAL
COMPASS THE
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JUSTIFY ANYTHING.**



But as a Christian, our hope in this life and the life to come are found in the promises of God. It is an unshakeable hope. I Peter 1:3 tells us that we are *“born again to a living hope.”* Our hope is in direct proportion to our degree of faith. The more profound our faith in God is the greater and more profound our hope will be. A deep abiding faith will produce a deep abiding hope.



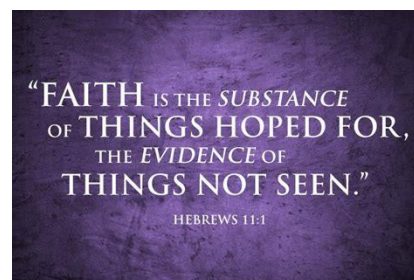
The passage of scripture in Hebrews 10:38 is a re-quoting of Habakkuk 2:4 which says, *“But my righteous one will live by faith.”* The correlation and connection between faith and hope are true. Our faith produces hope. Our hope produces perseverance. Without faith, we will shrink back. That is what the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is all about - those heroes of the faith that did not shrink back. They persevered until the end because they held fast to their faith to the end.

Over the next few weeks, I will be examining the faith of those listed in the “Faith Hall of Fame.” But for today, I want to examine the **character of faith** found in verse one, the **activism of faith** found in verse two, and **faith’s understanding** found in verse three. In last week’s Sunday school lesson, these verses were studied in great depth.



Faith’s Character

Verse one says, *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”* Faith’s character exhibits a certainty, an unwavering certainty of what God has promised. It is not a feeling. It is not a tingly euphoric encounter. It is not optimism or positive thinking. It is not a brainless sentimental feeling. It is a solid conviction resting on God’s certain, unshakeable word. This confidence in God’s word enables us to trust God with our future and trust His word for that which is unseen.



In many ways, our faith enables us to trust the unseen things of God as certain truth and unshakeable reality. What exactly is our future and how can we be certain of it?

The first half of verse one points us to the future hope we have. The KJV says it like this, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.”* Our faith puts us in a position to be able to trust God for our future. What exactly does a Christian hope for?

1. We as Christians should be *“hoping for Christ’s return.”* The bible describes this hope as our *“Blessed Hope.”* The disciples over and over were awaiting Christ to return in their day. They were there when Christ ascended up into the clouds. An angel came and told them that just as Christ has returned back unto God, one day, He would return.

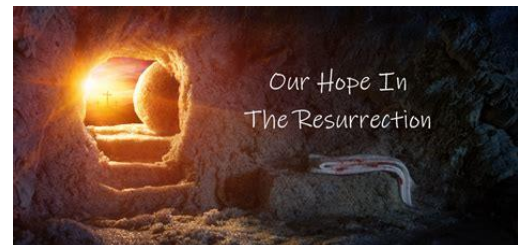


The disciples believed in the imminent return of Christ. The early church sold all they had and held it in common because they were certain Christ would come again shortly. Over time heresy crept into the church saying Christ had already come. But the promises that were given to the early churches are still valid for us today.

2 Timothy 4:8 reminds us that there is a crown awaiting those that *“love His appearing.”* As believers in Christ, we should have a burning longing in our hearts for Christ and His return. Instead, some may have a sense of dread because we are not living as we should, we are not totally satisfied with Christ, we have more wild oats to sow, we really are not prepared to meet God.

If you don’t have the hope of Christ’s appearing operating in your life, then maybe you need to do some reevaluation on the priorities in your life.

2. Secondly, we as Christians should have the *“hope of the resurrection.”* I Peter 1:3 says, *“In his great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

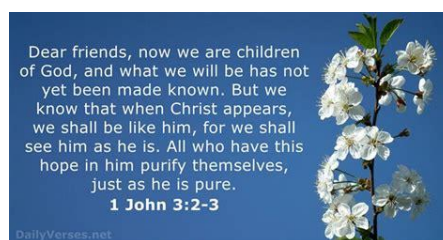


When we gather with a family in the cemetery as we lay to rest a dear loved one, I want them to hold fast to the truth of the resurrection in their heart. We do not simply lay them in the ground as people that have no hope. We come and place them in a temporary home until Christ returns and transfigures their body and resurrects it to newness of life.

Just as Jesus Christ was dead three days in the grave, just as Christ was resurrected, those that are in Christ will be raised to newness of life. When we die, our spirits are immediately in the presence of God. But our bodies one day will be transformed just as Christ was, and forever we will be with the Lord in His eternal kingdom.

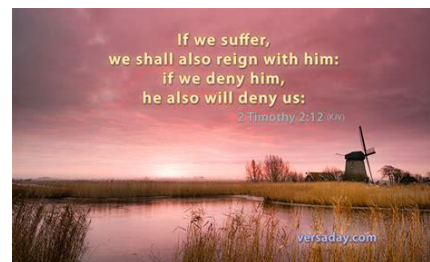
Believers in this Hope of Christ, are able to lay their loved one to rest because they know they will see them one day. Those that pass from this world into the next realize we are only passing through for a brief period of time. Our lives are being fitted for heaven here. Our hope of resurrection sustains us through our trials and tribulations.

3. A third thing Christians have is *“hope in our glorification.”* We will be transformed to be like Christ. I John 3:2-3 says, *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope (hope of glorification) in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*

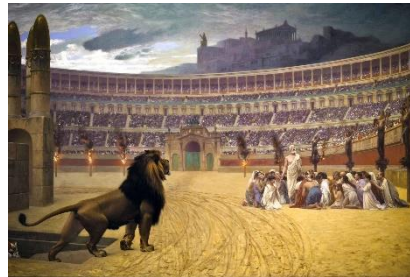


Because we know our future glorified state, we realize we need to walk in this world as sin free as possible. We do not need to become entangled in sin that will draw us away from God. Our hope is our glorification and we need to live as He lived.

4. A fourth thing that Christians have *“hope in that we will reign with Him.”* 2 Timothy 2:12 reminds us that *“if we endure we will also reign with him.”* We will be invited to participate in the coming kingdom of God. Revelation 22:5 says we will live in the City of God. *“There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”*



Throughout history, as believers in Christ have stood before judges and executioners they have held fast to these promises of God. They have willingly forfeited their life rather than deny their faith in God. They held on to the promise that Christ will return, that they will be resurrected, that they will be glorified, and they will reign with Christ in the coming age. They did not deny their faith because they KNEW what Christ said was true.



None of us have seen what God has prepared for us, but there have been glimpses of that truth given to some.

In Genesis 28, Jacob had a vision of a ladder coming down out of heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. The activity of God among men was visible to Jacob. At the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James and John caught a glimpse of Jesus Christ with Moses and Elijah, all of which were transfigured and changed into a new body. John the Apostle, while on the Isle of Patmos, saw a vision of heaven and it is recorded for us in God's word. Through God's word, we have glimpses of the unseen reality. We are called upon to have faith.



Faith's Activism

We are called upon to have an active faith. Verse two says, "*For by it (faith) the elders (ancient bible hero's) obtained a good testimony.*"

They were able to translate their future certainty into a present action.

If you looked at Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they demonstrated faith in God. The king had decreed no one was to worship any other God except the statue of the king. These three young men determined in their heart that they were only going to worship their God and no other. They were threatened by the king but they refused to obey. (Daniel 3:16-18)



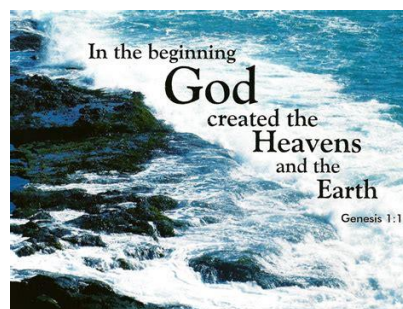
The king had them thrown into the fiery furnace, but God came to their rescue. When the king looked in, he saw a fourth person there with

them *“like the son of God.”* (3:25) These three young men took God at His word and God honored their activism – their faith – by rescuing them.

Faith’s Understanding

Our faith is anchored and secure in the hope of Christ’s return, our bodily resurrection, our future glorification, through our relationship with Christ. Just as Christ was resurrected from the dead, we too will be joined with him as joint heirs with Christ in the world to come. At times, we catch glimpses of the unseen which reassure us of that unseen reality.

Our present world is here to help us understand God as our creator. The writer of Hebrews in verse three says, *“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”*



The world in which we live is an amazing creation. Every year, a new creature is found that scientists didn’t know existed. The diversity of creation is astounding. The complexity of how each animal is created to survive or capture its prey still dazzles us. If you widen your field of vision and look out into the expanse of planets and stars, you become more aware of how incredibly small we are in this universe. The nearest star is 25 million miles away. Our galaxy is only one of billions of galaxies out there. When we grasp the enormity of God’s creation we should respond in praise and adoration.



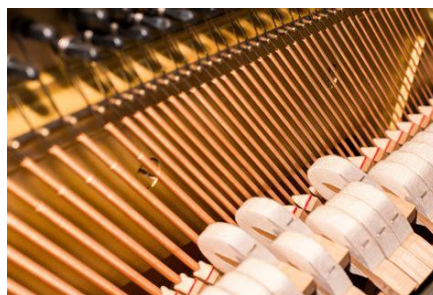
But not everyone that studies the world and universe are ready to praise God. In fact, they use their scientific method to do just the opposite. Many refuse to put their faith in the Creator.

They remind me of a mouse and his family that one day discovered a piano. This little mouse family made their home on the inside of a piano. One day music began to be played. The music filled the space and they drew comfort and wonder from it. They thought someone surely must be making this music, someone



from above is providing the music. They loved to think of the Great Player which they could not see.

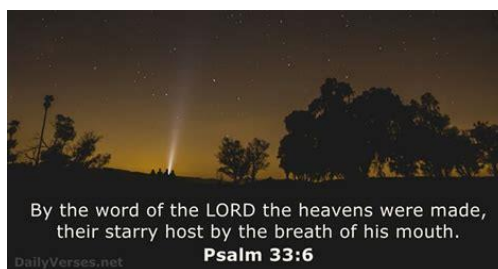
Then one day, a daring mouse climbed up part of the piano and returned very thoughtful. He had found out how the music was made. Wires were the secret. They were tightly stretched and placed at gradual lengths and trembled when they vibrated, therefore giving them the sound. With this new information, the mice had to adjust their old belief system. None but the most conservative mice could any longer believe in the Unseen Player.



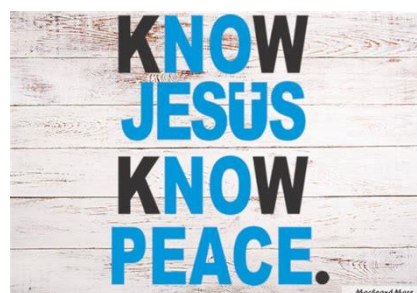
Later another mouse explorer went a little further with his explanation. He discovered there were little hammers that struck the chords that made the sound. Hammers were now the secret. This theory was more complicated but the mouse went on to prove it was all purely mechanical and mathematical. The Unseen Player was only considered to be a myth, even though the Pianist continued to play.

For the believer, those who know the Pianist, it is all so clear. *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”*

We simply accept by faith God’s word. God simply spoke creation into existence out of nothing. Psalm 33:6, 9 says, *“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth ... For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded and it stood firm.”* God spoke it ... and poof ... it was. He created all the stars of heaven out of nothing, *ex nihilo*.



We may smile at the story of the policeman that joined hands with that man on the Golden Gate bridge and jumped. The world in which we live has lost hope. Apart from Christ there is no hope. But with Christ, we have eternal hope. To Know Jesus is to Know Peace.



What our world needs is the hope of Christ. Our lost friends, neighbors, and family need to be born again. Faith is the key that unlocks the hope that the world so desperately needs.



The benefit of faith is that it gives us the will to persevere. It also gives us the ability, by God's grace, to take the hands of others and lead them away from the bridges of despair and bring them back to the certainty of faith in Jesus Christ, and bring them into the knowledge of Christ.

Faith is ... the key to unlocking the hope we so desperately need and cannot live without. May we learn to walk by faith and not by sight thereby receiving the reward of the righteous.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹Outline from R. Kent Hughes Commentary on Hebrews 11:1-3

²Mikey's Funnies – An Age Funny, July 27, 2022

Fremont Missionary Baptist Church, Fremont NC
July 20, 2008

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