

True Faith – Hebrews 11:1 – 2

Hebrews 11:1-2, *“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.”*

THEME – WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD. (HEBREWS 11:6a)

PRINCIPLE #1 – TRUE FAITH IS BEING SURE OF WHAT WE HOPE FOR.

EXPLANATION – Hebrews 11:1 says, *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for...”*

What are the things Christians hope for?

- God’s presence and sufficient grace for every trial they experience in this life.
- Eternal salvation from the penalty of their sin by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone.
- An eternal home in heaven where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, prepared for them by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- A new body which will be like the Lord Jesus Christ’s powerful resurrected body, perfect, free from sin, free from sickness and aging.
- A reunion with their loved ones who have died in Christ.
- The return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why do Christians hope for these things?

Because they are promised to us by God in His Word. So Christian faith is believing that the promises of God that have not been fulfilled will certainly be fulfilled in the future. The Christian who has the faith that pleases God is absolutely certain that God will never leave them nor forsake them (Hebrews 13:5), and that God will give them the sufficient grace and strength for every situation they experience in this life. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

The Christian who has the faith that pleases God is absolutely certain when they die they will have eternal life in heaven because the Lord Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross satisfied God’s wrath for their sin.

The Christian who has the faith that pleases God is absolutely certain they will be given a home in heaven prepared for them by the Lord Jesus Christ. They are absolutely certain they will be given a new powerful body, which will be like Christ’s glorious resurrected body, perfect, free from sin, free from sickness and aging and they are absolutely certain that they will be reunited with their loved ones who have died in Christ.

The Christian who has the faith that pleases God knows that they will experience these things in the future because God has promised them to him in His word, and God cannot lie nor can He fail to keep His promises.

ILLUSTRATION – In “Foxes Book of Martyrs” there is the account of Jerome Russell and Alexander Kennedy, two English Protestants who were arrested, imprisoned and condemned to death as heretics because of their belief in salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Early the next morning, Russell and Kennedy were led from their prison cells to the place of execution. They could have denied their Lord, right then and there, and been spared. But when Kennedy, who was a young man, began to display signs of fear, Russell quickly encouraged him to stand firm by saying, “Brother, fear not; greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. The pain that we are to suffer is short, and shall be light; but our joy and consolation shall never have an end. Let us, therefore, strive to enter into our Master and Savior’s joy, by the same straight way which He hath taken before us. Death cannot hurt us, for it is already destroyed by Him, for whose sake we are now going to suffer.

John Fox finishes the account with this. “When they arrived at the fatal spot, they both kneeled down and prayed for some time; after which being fastened to the stake, and the fagots [kindling] lighted, they cheerfully resigned their souls into the hands of Him who gave them, in full hopes of an everlasting reward in the heavenly mansions.”

How could these men calmly submit to being burned alive? Why did they willingly undergo severe suffering and death? Because of their faith which gave them an absolute certainty that God, who is faithful would keep His promises to them.

Christian hope sees physical death as the beginning of eternity in heaven, which will be far better than anything we have experienced on earth. Unfortunately, many Christians in the contemporary church live as though this present life on earth is better than the life to come. As God’s children, sometimes we need to be reminded that our life for eternity in heaven will be far superior to life on earth.

APPLICATION – Even though the Christian has not received the blessings promised to them in this life, the Christian with faith that pleases God is convinced of their reality and agrees with the Apostle Paul when he says in 1 Corinthians 5:6-7, “... *We are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*”

Christian faith that pleases God is believing that something God promises will happen, not because we hope it will happen but because the one and only living and true God who cannot lie promised that it will happen.

THEME – WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD (HEBREWS 11:6a)

PRINCIPLE #2 – TRUE FAITH IS BEING CERTAIN OF WHAT WE DO NOT SEE.

Hebrews 11:1, *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we cannot see.”*

Christian faith that pleases God is the conviction that an invisible spiritual kingdom inhabited by spiritual beings surrounds us and they cannot be seen, weighed, measured, analyzed, or touched, and yet they are as real as anything we can see, touch, taste, smell or hear. If we are to live by faith, we cannot allow our physical senses, what we see, taste, touch, smell, and hear have the last word. We must move out of the sense realm and into the scripture realm. If our five senses tell us one thing and the scriptures tell us quite another, we must believe the scriptures. Faith is the sixth sense that enables the Christian to move into the unseen and eternal world.

What are these invisible things which the Christian with faith that pleases God is certain about because their existence is declared in the Bible?

CHRISTIANS ARE CERTAIN THAT SATAN AND HIS DEMONIC FORCES EXIST

1 Peter 5:8b, *“... your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

Ephesians 6:12, *“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

CHRISTIANS ARE CERTAIN THAT ANGELS EXIST

Hebrews 1:14, *“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.”*

CHRISTIANS ARE CERTAIN THE HOLY SPIRIT EXISTS

John 14:16, *“I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever the spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be with you.”*

CHRISTIANS ARE CERTAIN THAT GOD AND JESUS CHRIST EXIST

Acts 2:33 says that Christ was, *“... exalted to the right hand of God.”*

Romans 8:34 says that Christ is, *“... at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”*

Hebrews 2:7b-8, says that God has *“crowned Christ with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.”*

Some may say it's crazy, but as Christians, we believe in a God we've never seen. We believe in a Savior and a Holy Spirit we've never seen. We believe we're going to a Heaven we've never

seen to dwell in a glorified body we've never seen, for an eternity we could never experience in this life. When people believe in things they cannot see, sometimes we say they are delusional and irrational and we treat them for mental illness.

Why do Christians have the conviction to live as if these things are true, when we have never seen them with their eyes or touched them to see if they are real? Because God in His Word tells us they are there, and He has supernaturally given us the faith to believe in Him and His Word.

Ephesians 2:8, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."*

Philippians 1:29, *"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer with him."*

2 Corinthians 4:6, *"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.'"*

It's not natural to believe in the Christian faith. In fact, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:14, *"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

We were all spiritually dead in our transgressions and sins, but God supernaturally intervened in our lives and made us alive spiritually and when He did He gave us the faith to believe His Word. I like the story about Elisha.

1 Kings 6:13-19, *"Go out and find out where Elisha is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: He is in Dothan. Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army of horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my Lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."*

Why was the servant scared? Did he see too much? No he saw too little. He was scared because he only saw the visible and not the invisible. He saw only the visible and not God. Our faith must not rest on physical evidence, but on scriptural revelation. We must choose to believe the promises of God who cannot lie.

Faith also means we believe what God has said even if it goes against human reason. When the Bible says that God created the heavens and the earth and all that is on them, I believe it even though I didn't see Him create it.

When God says that Jesus was born to a virgin named Mary, I believe it even though intellectually it is humanly impossible. When the Bible says that God made the Sun stand still, brought water from a rock, flooded the earth, parted the Red Sea and the Jordan River, and raised Christ physically from the dead, I believe it even though I did not witness these things with my own two eyes.

But if God did not do miracles which man could not duplicate or explain, He would not be worthy of our worship. If we are to live by faith, we must believe and act upon the promises found in the scriptures.

Ron Dunn, a Southern Baptist Pastor in Texas tells this story ... "A church member told me he couldn't afford to tithe. He had figured and figured, but there was no way he could do it. "I've got it down in black and white," he said, "figures don't lie." I said, "Well, neither does the Bible. And if God tells us to do something, there is a way to do it, if we are willing."

This man's problem was not that he figured. There is nothing unspiritual about that. But he figured wrong. He figured without faith. In adding his figures he forgot to include the promises of God. His conclusion was based solely on things visible. God said in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11, *"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."*

APPLICATION – As we live our lives do we see only our problems or do we see the invisible promises of God? Do we come to church and talk and sing about a great and almighty God who is all powerful and willing to help us and then run the church and live our daily lives as though He doesn't exist?

THEME – WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD (HEBREWS 11:6a)

PRINCIPLE #3 – THE MEN OF OLD GAINED APPROVAL FROM GOD FOR THEIR FAITH.

God has always approved of the person who operated on faith. Faith is not simply one way to please God; it is the only way.

Hebrews 11:6, *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."*

The only thing Christ ever rebuked the disciples for was their lack of faith. Jesus never rebuked the disciples for their lack of talent. He never rebuked them for their lack of education, or their

lack of money. The only thing that He ever rebuked them for was their failure to believe in Him and His power. After His resurrection from the dead, Mark 16:14 tells us, *"... Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were eating; He rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen Him after He had risen."*

God is not just interested in our saving faith. He is interested in the growth of our faith in His ability to take care of us. Because He wants our faith to grow he puts us in circumstances that stretch and mature our faith.

James puts it this way in James 1:2-4, *"Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing."*

In every Christian there is a muscle called "faith" which can easily become soft and flabby unless it is put under the stress test, which James calls "various trials" and "testing". It is interesting to note that when God tests our faith He never gives us a multiple choice test, a true-false test, or an essay test to see how much knowledge we've crammed into our head. He tests us at the level of life. He tests us to see if we'll trust him as we experience problems in real life. He tests us to see if we will trust him to provide a job for us. He tests us to see if we will trust him when we can't seem to meet our budget? Will we trust him when our car breaks down? Or when the children get sick? Will we trust him when we experience family difficulty?

Will we trust him when bad things happen to us? When we lose our job? When we lose our spouse, to death or divorce? When we lose a child, or parent to death? When we suffer from a terminal disease? Will we believe what Paul says in Romans 8:28, *"... that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose."*

Or will we reject our belief in a good God who loves us? We need to have faith in God like Joseph. His birth mother died in childbirth with his younger brother. He was hated by his stepbrothers and they could not say a kind word about him. His stepbrothers plotted to kill him, but sold him into slavery instead. He was falsely accused of rape and spent two years in prison for it. Did his tough times destroy his faith in God? No. Later he told his brothers in Genesis 50:20, *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."*

APPLICATION – How are you and I doing in our test? Are we trusting God to take care of us or are we overcome by fear? Are we trusting God for wisdom or are we trying to solve, our problems without God? Have we lost our faith in God because of pain and suffering in our life? Have our trials made us angry and bitter toward people and God? Is Jesus Christ pleased with our faith? Or if he was in our church today would he say, "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?"

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PRINCIPLE #2 – TRUE FAITH IS BEING CERTAIN OF WHAT WE DO NOT SEE.

PRINCIPLE #3 – THE MEN OF OLD GAINED APPROVAL FROM GOD FOR THEIR FAITH.

SPECIFIC APPLICATION – If you are not a Christian, true saving Biblical faith does not just believe in a generic God. It believes in the only living and true God who reveals Himself as a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. True saving Christian faith that pleases God the Father believes that Jesus Christ is eternally God the second person of the trinity. It believes that Jesus came to earth as a man being born through the virgin birth. He lived a sinless life and died on the cross as a substitute for sinful human beings and rose physically from the dead on the third day after He was crucified. He was taken to the right hand of the father as affirmation of the success of His sacrifice, and there He intercedes for us until He returns.

If you are a Christian and your faith in God is waning, strengthen your faith by reading the Bible and seeing how great, loving, and good our God is.