

Title: **WHAT IS FAITH?**
Text: Hebrews 11:1-6
Subject: *Faith in Christ*
Date: Sunday Evening — December 21, 2008
Tape # Z-60a
Readings: *Frank Hall and James Jordan*
Introduction:

We often here people refer to themselves and/or others as “people of faith.” They speak of faith as a moral virtue, or a commendable characteristic. Both our current President and our President-elect refer to themselves as men of faith. Yet, the one is a liberal Methodist and the other is a cross between Black Muslim and a Campbellite. When I hear, “He is a person of faith,” or “She is a person of faith,” I take that to mean they believe in something and practice some kind of religion, or more precisely, they believe in themselves and are very careful not to allow religion to interfere too much with their lives. Whatever the word “faith” means in that context, it has nothing to do with saving faith, the faith God gives to sinners, that faith that is set forth in the Word of God.

Proposition: The word “faith,” as it is used in Scripture, refers to the God-given confidence believing sinners have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Anything other than this God-given confidence in Christ is not faith; but only a delusion of the soul.

Several weeks ago, Bro. Lindsay Campbell asked me to seek a message from the Lord explaining what it is to believe God. I believe the Lord has given me the message. Turn with me to Hebrews 11:1-6. The title of my message is — **WHAT IS FAITH?**

There is no subject in all the world more important, and no subject about which there is more confusion. I daresay, men and women in our society are more ignorant and confused about faith than about any other subject they presume to understand.

Paul has told us that “*the just shall live by faith*” (Hebrews 10:38), and that those who have faith “*believe to the saving of the soul*” (Hebrews 10:39). Now, let’s read Hebrews 11:1-6 together.

(Hebrews 11:1-6) “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (2) For by it the elders obtained a good report. (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. (4) By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. (5) By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (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.*”

The substance, the ground, the foundation of our confident hope of eternal salvation is our faith in Christ. And that faith is the evidence of our eternal justification and everlasting salvation (v. 1).

Faith understands what the most learned scientists cannot fathom. Faith understands that “*the worlds were framed by the word of God,*” for faith simply believes God (vv. 2-3).

Abel understood that the only way a guilty man could approach God is by blood atonement. His brother, Cain, did not. Cain thought that a man could please God and win his favor by works. Abel believed God. Cain did not (v. 4).

Enoch understood that the only way a man could please God and be accepted of him is by faith. So Enoch walked with God by faith. And when he left this world, he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

And, in verse 6, Paul tells us that the only way to be saved, the only way to be accepted of God, the only way to walk with God, the only way to please God is by faith, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. — “*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.*”

Divisions: I want to answer four questions in this message.

1. What is faith?
2. Why is faith necessary?
3. How can I obtain this faith?

4. Do I have faith?

WHAT IS FAITH?

There are many forms of false faith by which the souls of men are deluded. Judas, Demas and Diotrophes all had faith. But theirs was a false faith. Many people have a denominational faith. I do not say that their faith is without sincerity, devotion and zeal. But unless they have that faith which is described in the Word of God, their faith is damning to their souls. James tells us that even the devils have faith. But what is that true, saving faith, that faith by which a man pleases God? That is the question I want to answer in this message.

There is but one true faith. And you and I must examine ourselves and prove ourselves on this point, whether we be in “*the faith*” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Faith, true, saving faith, consists of three things: knowledge, assent, and trust. If we would be pleasing to God, if we would come to him and be saved by him, we must know the revelation of God in the gospel, we must give assent that God’s revelation is truth, and we must trust him whom God reveals.

The first aspect of faith is knowledge. — Knowledge is not faith. Yet, there is no faith without knowledge. Paul says, “*He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*” **Our text clearly shows the necessity of knowledge.** Faith in Christ is a heart work. But it is not a leap in the dark. It is based upon knowledge. In order for us to trust, there must be someone, or something known for us to trust (Isaiah 53:11; John 17:3). Two things, according to our text, must be known:

(John 17:3) “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

In order for anyone to have faith, he must know the Lord God, as he is revealed in the Person and work of Christ (John 1:18; 14:6-9; Hebrews 1:1-3).

(John 1:18) “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.”

(John 14:6-9) “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (7) If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. (8) Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. (9) Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Show us the Father?”

(Hebrews 1:1-3) “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, (2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (3) Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

You must know that God is. You must know that God is who He says He is. You must know that God is what He says He is.

- Sovereign and good (Exodus 33:18-19).
- Just and gracious (Isaiah 45:20-22).
- Holy and merciful (Isaiah 6:3, 7).

The only way man can know God is by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the God-man (2 Corinthians 4:5-6).

(2 Corinthians 4:5-6) “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

And you must know that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Isaiah 55:3, 6, 7; Jeremiah 29:13-14). — He rewards those who seek him with mercy, grace, salvation and eternal life!

(Isaiah 55:3) “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David.”

(Isaiah 55:6-7) “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: (7) Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

(Jeremiah 29:13-14) “And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (14) And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.”

All who seek the Lord, all who come to God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be rewarded with eternal life and everlasting salvation. This too must be known. But how can we know that God will reward every believer with eternal salvation? — By the Gospel! (1 Corinthians 15:3; Romans 3:24-26).

(Romans 3:24-26) “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

(1 Corinthians 15:3) “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”

- The Lord Jesus earned righteousness for His people (Romans 5:19).
- The Son of God purchased salvation for His elect (Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9:12).
- God has promised that salvation to all who trust His Son (John 3:14-16, 36; Romans 10:9-13).

This is the point I am making – Gospel knowledge is essential to saving faith. And the matter of paramount importance in the knowledge of the gospel is the redemptive work of Christ.

- He is an able Redeemer – The God-man!
- He is a willing Redeemer (Isaiah 50:5-7).
- He is an effectual Redeemer (Isaiah 53:10).

Unless a person knows these things, he cannot have faith, he cannot please God, he cannot be saved; but, merely knowing these things is not faith. Knowledge is necessary. But knowledge alone is not faith¹.

Along with that knowledge, our hearts must give assent that these things are true. — Many people know the truth. They have heard it for years. They have been catechized and trained in gospel truth from their infancy. But saving faith involves a willing, voluntary, deliberate, considered assent to the truth of God. Faith simply embraces the Revelation of God as the Revelation of God.

(1 John 5:9-13) “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. (10) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (11) And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (12) He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

At this moment, you are being confronted with the truth of God. Your Bible is open on your lap. The truth is staring you in the face. God is speaking directly to your heart. Now you will make a decision. You will either embrace the testimony of God as the Truth, or you will reject it and declare that God is a liar! (1 John 5:10).

¹ “Of all the poison which at this day is diffused in the minds of men, corrupting them from the mystery of the gospel, there is no part that is more pernicious than this one perverse imagination, that to ‘believe in Christ’ is nothing at all but to ‘believe the doctrine of the gospel!’ which yet we grant is included therein.” – John Owen

(1 John 5:10) “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”

Have you now embraced this gospel of God’s free grace as the truth? If you have, you are not far from the kingdom of God. But still, there is something else necessary. Faith knows the gospel and gives assent to the gospel of the truth. But there is more – **Saving faith trusts the Lord Jesus Christ.** A person acts upon what he believes; and the act of faith is trusting Christ.

Illustration: The Woman with an Issue of Blood
The Publican
The Leper

“He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, be his sins never so many; but he that believeth not in the Lord Jesus must be damned, be his sins never so few” – (Thomas Brooks).

WHY IS FAITH IN CHRIST NECESSARY?

That is my second question. — Why is it necessary for sinners to trust the Lord Jesus Christ alone in order to be saved?

1. **No one has ever pleased God and been accepted of Him except those who have simply believed.**

Hebrews 11 records the names of 17 men and women, whose histories are well known, who pleased God. How did they do it? By faith alone! Many others, mentioned in the Bible have perished under the wrath and curse of God, though they did some good, commendable things.

- Repentance will not save you! (Esau – Judas).
- Confession of sin will not save you! (Ahab – Saul).
- Self-denial and sacrifice will not save you! (Ananias).
- Only faith pleases God, because only faith gives all praise, honor and glory to the Son of God, offering God that which God alone has provided and accepted.

2. **Faith is necessary, because without faith there is no vital union with Christ.**

Illustration: *The Grafted Branch*

The Member and the Head

3. **Faith is necessary, because God plainly declares that works have nothing to do with salvation** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

(Ephesians 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.”

Illustration: *Cain and Abel*

4. **Faith is necessary, because salvation is by grace alone** (Romans 4:16; Galatians 5:2-4; 2 Timothy 1:9).

(Romans 4:16) “Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.”

(Galatians 5:2-4) “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (3) For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. (4) Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

(2 Timothy 1:9) “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

- Faith brings nothing!
- Faith promises nothing!
- Faith does nothing!

HOW CAN I OBTAIN THIS FAITH?

- Not by heredity (John 1:11-13).

(John 1:11-13) “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (12) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: (13)

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

- Not by education.
- Not by reason.
- Not by ceremony!
- Faith in Christ is the free gift of God’s sovereign grace.

If you obtain faith, you will get it by God’s appointed means – Gospel Preaching (Romans. 10:13-17).

(Romans 10:13-17) “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

If you obtain faith, you will get it by Divine Revelation (Matthew 16:16; Galatians 1:15).

If you obtain faith, you will get it by regenerating grace and the irresistible call of God the Holy Spirit, by the almighty operation of God (John 6:63; Ephesians 1:18-20; Colossians 2:12).

(Ephesians 1:18-20) “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, (19) And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, (20) Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*.”

DO I HAVE TRUE, SAVING FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?

It is possible for men and women to know whether or not they have faith in Christ (1 John 5:13).

(1 John 5:13) “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

If I have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ...

- I renounce all personal righteousness!
- I trust Christ alone!
- I willingly surrender to the rule of Christ as my Lord.

(Luke 14:25-33) “And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, (26) If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (27) And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (28) For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*? (29) Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, (30) Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. (31) Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? (32) Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. (33) So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

If I have this faith, it causes me to love the Lord Jesus Christ and love my brethren.

Application: Mark 16:16; 1 John 5:10-13.

(Mark 16:16) “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

(1 John 5:10-13) “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (11)

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (12) He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

1. Trust Christ, and He will save you. – Indeed, if you trust him, he has saved you.
2. Confess Christ in baptism – Follow the Lamb!
3. Children of God, honor Christ – How? By faith.
 - Faith in Christ pleases God.
 - Faith in Christ honors God.
 - Faith in Christ is honored by God.

WHAT IS FAITH? Here is a sevenfold definition of faith I picked up from a sermon by Ebenezer Erskine a long, long time ago.

1. **Faith is the gift of God.** It is not the product of a free will. It is the operation of the Spirit of God by the Word of God and is the parent of all other grace.
2. **Faith has Christ Jesus as its principal object,** for it is faith in Christ Jesus — our Lord, Savior, Mediator and Hope. Christ is the bread; faith is the mouth which eats. Christ is the brazen serpent; faith is the eye that looks.
3. **Faith is receiving Christ,** not just hearing about Him or acknowledging Him, but a committal to Him. Is Christ meat? Then eat! Is Christ living water? Then drink! Is Christ the refuge? Then flee to Him! Is Christ Lord? Then worship Him!
4. **Faith is to rest upon Christ.** “*Rest in the Lord*” (Psalm 37:7). Faith is not an isolated act based upon an intellectual knowledge of some facts, but is a trusting in and resting upon Christ to perform all that I need.
5. **Faith is to rest upon Christ alone!** The word “alone” is important. Most men, by nature, try to add something to the sacrifice and intercession of Christ. God has established a bridge of communication between heaven and earth by the obedience and blood of Christ, and every other passage is blocked by the holiness and justice of God.

6. **Faith rests upon Christ as he is presented in the Gospel.** We ask no other sign than the Word of God. Faith is to believe the record that God hath given concerning His Son. — *“He that hath the Son of God hath life.”*

7. **Faith rests upon Christ for salvation, sanctification, righteousness and full redemption!** The goal of faith is the salvation of our souls; and this our Lord undertook in the eternal covenant and which He completed on Calvary when He cried, *“It is finished!”*

“Nothing, either great or small, nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus Christ did it all a long, long time ago.
It is finished!’ yes, indeed, finished every jot;
Sinner, this is all you need; tell me, Is it not?”

Oh, may God the Holy Spirit grant you faith in Christ! May he be pleased to perform in you that mighty operation of his grace, without which you will forever perish! O Holy Spirit of God, perform that mighty operation in me continually, ever cause me to trust my Savior, and thus believing him to ever be found pleasing and honoring my God.

O gift of gifts! O grace of faith!
My God, how can it be
That Thou, who hast discerning love
Shouldst give that gift to me?

Ah, grace, unto unlikeliest hearts
It is thy boast to come;
The glory of thy light to find
In darkest spots a home.

Amen.