

- ***READ Hebrews 11:1-6/PRAYER*** This week is a very exciting week for our church family as we are preparing for our Vacation Bible School which is focusing on "Trailblazers For The Faith." Our many class teachers from this church family and even some guest speakers have invested many hours towards the teaching of students both younger and older about some of those men who blazed the trail for others who would come after them in the way of faith in our God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Men such as Jacob, Elijah, Nehemiah, Daniel, and John the Baptist blazed the trail for the faith that so many of us possess today. Without them or many others, we would not have the grand examples of faithful individuals to strive to emulate that we have contained for us within Scripture. This week of studies together looks be great, and we hope many will join us as we seek to grow in faith and glorify our Father in heaven.
- As a means of kicking off the week of studies, this morning we want to take some time to consider faith. If we are going to be considering men who blazed the trail for the faith, then it would be wise of us to make sure that we can answer the question, "what is faith?" The truth is that faith doesn't mean the same thing to all people within the religious community. Some people see faith as subjective, meaning that faith is to you whatever you want it to be. It could simply be hope, it could be simple belief or acknowledgment, or it could be something different all together. So what is faith? Let's take some time to examine the text here in **Hebrews 11:1-6** and bring in some other Scriptures that will help us come to know what it is exactly that the trailblazers are leading us to.

I. Without faith...we cannot please God.

- A. We want to begin by considering what is said in **v.6**. Notice something that ought to really catch our attention... "without faith it is impossible to please *Him*." If we are wanting to be a people who please God and receive the reward of heaven that He has promised to those who seek Him...then the Hebrew writer says that we must have faith. He says earlier that the men of old were able to gain approval by God through their faith. (**v.2**)
- B. Logically speaking, this means that anyone who does not have faith...a person lacking the faith that Scripture speaks of...cannot please God and therefore will not receive the rewards that He has promised. I don't know about you, but this whole faith thing seems to be a pretty big deal.
- C. But sadly, so many tend to treat faith as something that is not that big of a deal. Again, some people will hold to the idea that your faith is whatever you want to make it, so does that mean that I can just have any kind of faith and be pleasing to God, or is faith defined for us by God? Let me suggest that God defines the faith that pleases Him and that we must come to have that faith if we want to receive His rewards.

II. Faith involves belief, but what we believe must be based upon the truth.

- A. What components make up the faith that pleases God? Within this same verse, I am confident that we can come to know that God pleasing faith involves belief. "He who comes to God must believe that he is..." (**v.6**) The fact that the Hebrew writer phrases this in this way must lead us to a couple of conclusions.
- B. Firstly, we must conclude that faith involves our minds. Go back with me to **v.1**. Notice that the Hebrew writer says that faith is the "assurance of things hoped for." Assurance and hope are things that take place within our minds. Another word for assurance might be confidence. So we are confident in our minds and we hope for things within our minds. In other words, faith has to do with what we believe to be so, and we hope based upon that belief...this leads to our next conclusion.
- C. Secondly, we must conclude that we cannot just believe anything, but that we must believe specific things based upon evidence and truth. Back in **v.6**, notice that the Hebrew writer mentions one specific thing that must be believed and that is belief that "He is." Meaning, we must believe in God and then we must believe in who He is and what He will do for the faithful. But is this the only thing that must be believed? Must we only acknowledge God and that He rewards those who seek Him?
- D. Speaking very broadly, we must acknowledge, believe, and trust in everything that He has given man to know. God's Word is truth (**John 17:17**), and anything beliefs we have must be founded in it.

III. Our belief upon truth must lead us to action.

- A. But what ought those beliefs in truth caused us to do? Let me suggest that those truth founded beliefs ought to push us towards obedient actions that God wills for man to do. But let's take a moment and recognize that not all beliefs are based in truth. In **Romans 1:21-32**, we find Paul laying forth the vitally important truth that God will allow man to believe lies if he refuses to accept that which is true. God's great gift to mankind of free will allows man to either believe that which is true or false and those beliefs will influence the way they live their lives.
- B. We certainly don't want to be one of those number who believe Satan's lies instead of submitting to God's truth in belief and obedience. Instead, we must acknowledge God's truths and be willing to follow them wherever they lead us.
- C. Consider the two examples that are found back in **Hebrews 11:1-6**. Many more examples are given to us throughout the rest of the chapter. 17 individuals are specifically named, but the first two are Abel and Enoch. They are said to have obtained the testimony and witness that they were righteous and pleasing to God, respectively. Abel was able to claim righteousness before God because he offered a better sacrifice than Cain. We can infer from **Genesis 4** that God has laid forth what was expected concerning the sacrifices given by man. Abel acknowledged the truth that God had laid forth, he believed in what God had said, and he offered the righteous sacrifice in faith. God was pleased, and Abel is honored in this text. Then consider Enoch and how he was pleasing to God, as well. In reality, we don't know much about the specifics of Enoch or his life. All we know is given to us in **Genesis 5:21-24**. We know that he "walked with God", but really that is it. However, his walking with God must have made a truly amazing impression on God because it seems as if Enoch never died, but was instead taken up to the next life by God. Again, we don't know what exactly Enoch did to please God as he did, but we can assume that Enoch believed God's words to him and he obeyed him in all things.
- D. Did you happen to notice the first commonality between the two? Notice the first two words of **vv. 4,5**... "by faith." Both of these individuals displayed tremendous faith in their lives...so much so that they are the two men that begin this famous list of faithful individuals in this great hall of fame of faith. So what do we learn from these two men and the other God fearing people in this chapter who are said to be great people of faith? That answer leads us to our final point of conclusion...

IV. Biblical faith is belief based action.

- A. We began this lesson by asking the question, "What is faith?" Through what we have seen, we have come to recognize that faith is of the utmost importance...without faith we cannot be pleasing to God and we won't receive His gracious rewards. We've also seen that faith includes our minds and belief, but that the beliefs we have must be founded upon truth. God's Word is truth, thus we can conclude that if we listen to the Word of God, believe it, and obey what it says then we can be pleasing to God.
- B. This leads us to our nice and concise answer to the question, "what is faith?" I'm convinced that we can conclude from what we have seen this morning that faith is belief based action. It is not simply knowing...it is not simply doing...but it is knowing God's will, trusting in it, and obeying it in all that we do.

- C. It means realizing our need for God's grace because of our sins. Faith that leads one to becoming a Christian begins with understanding the truth that we are sinners in need of a Savior. **(Rom. 3:23)** From the very beginning, God established that life was the cost for sin, which is why we see sacrifices instituted from the very beginning. But God knew that there was the need for a perfect sacrifice, and that leads us to Jesus who John declared was the Lamb of God who had come to take away the sins of the world. **(John 1:29)** Through Jesus's perfect life, willing sacrifice, and resurrection from the dead...we can have hope of having our sins washed away and being joined again in fellowship with God. **(Matthew 20:28)** But God's Word also teaches us that in order to live with God and Jesus, we must first die as sinners. *"If we died with Him, we will also live with Him."* **(II Timothy 2:11)** *"I have been crucified with Christ."* **(Galatians 2:20)** So the question must be, how do we die with Christ? **Romans 6** teaches us that the death of the sinner occurs when the sinner hears the Gospel, believes the Gospel, and his belief pushes him to die to self in baptism so that he might be raised in new life. Faith in Jesus is the only thing that will allow our sins to be washed away, but we must be willing to do anything that Jesus demands of us.
- D. The same thing is true after we have been joined with Christ through faith and obedience. The truth of God's Word teaches us that we are to pursue holiness and godliness in all things and not go back to our former lives. **(I Peter 1:13-16)** Our faith is shown through our belief in the commands of God and our willingness to act upon that belief through obedience in how we live in this life. **James 2:14-26** shows us very clearly that faith and belief must be accompanied by works that prove such are present in our hearts. **(vv.14,17,24,26)**

So many people walk around each day and profess that they have faith in Jesus Christ, but far fewer are actually able to show that this is the case through the way they live their lives. We must recognize that our faith must be sustained through our belief in truth and our willingness to act upon it. As we go throughout this week of studies on those faithful individuals who blazed the trail for the faith we now possess, may we pay close attention to those things that sustained and grew their faith, and may all things we do be to the glory and honor of our most high God. May our faith allow us to stand before Him in the last day truly pleasing in His sight.