

- **\*READ Ephesians 4:1-6\*** As Paul is writing this great essay on the church and those disciples that make it what it is, he begins this section by stressing the need for unity among God's people. This unity can be had if disciples are willing to build themselves upon seven essential pillars that are found within these verses we have just read together. So far in this study, we have looked at the one body, the one Spirit, the one hope, and the one Lord and this morning we will use our time considering what might arguably be the most crucial of all of the pillars...the one faith that binds us all in unity.
- While this text makes it abundantly clear and explicitly states that there is just one faith, the landscape of the Christian world in our day shows this as simply not being our present reality. There are so many different and even contradicting faiths that claim to be valid faiths, but how can this be so if Paul states that there is simply one faith? This morning, we are not going to worry about showing what is wrong with the many different individual faiths of the world, but we simply want to go to the Bible to see what the faith that it describes truly is and why it is so important that we come to possess it within our lives. The word "faith" is found well over 200 times throughout the entirety of the Bible, but there are a few specific passages that we can look to that will really help us to answer the first question we are going to ask this morning as we seek to examine the one true faith of **Ephesians 4:5**, "What is faith?"

## I. What Is Faith?

### A. Faith is confidence in things hoped for and conviction in what is not seen.

1. We will begin where we began this assembly in **Hebrews 11**. In **verse 1**, we are given a strong definition of faith that teaches us that faith involves confidence and conviction. Both of these aspects of faith are mental in nature. They have to do with what we know, understand, and believe about God and His promises. Through having this confidence, conviction, knowledge, and understanding, we can gain approval in the eyes of God just as the godly men of old were approved by God. (**Hebrews 11:2**)
2. Throughout this chapter, we read of men and women who knew within themselves that God's great promises could be trusted. This shows us where true faith begins...with God. From Abel to Enoch to Noah to Abraham and beyond each of these individuals knew of God's will for them and they trusted in what He told them they were to do. They trusted in God's ability to fulfill his promises because He is God. They were confident in God's promises even though they had not yet seen that which was promised by God. They operated not by sight but by faith. (**II Corinthians 5:7**) This belief and willingness to act on such belief is exactly what James is speaking of in **James 2**, and that text gives us the second half of a solid understanding of what the truth faith that is discussed in the Bible details.

### B. Faith is belief-based action.

1. In **James 2:14-26**, James details what a true saving faith looks like within the lives of disciples. He starts the section by asking an important question concerning the one who says he has faith and yet does not have works to back it up. His question, "*Can that faith save him?*" So can a faith that is only confidence in God's promises and conviction of the unseen save a person? Does faith only involve that which is mental? James goes on to argue that that it very well cannot save a person. Here is his argument:
  - a) What good is it if you know that a brother or sister is without their basic needs and you only wish them that they be warmed and filled? (**James 2:15,16**)
  - b) Someone might try to pit faith and works against one another, but James was willing to show anyone his faith by his works. (**James 2:18**)
  - c) Having confidence and conviction in the existence of God is good, but it doesn't necessarily amount to much because even the demons believe in God. (**James 2:19**)

d) Abraham's faith was perfected when he was willing to follow the command of God and offer us his son Issac as a sacrifice. (**James 2:21-24**)

e) Even Rahab's faith, the woman who was a prostitute(!), in God was shown to be true when she helped God's messengers to be kept safe. (**James 2:25**)

2. All of this is summed up multiple times throughout these few verses when James repeatedly states, "faith without words is dead." (**James 2:17,20,26**) James spells this out pretty clearly and without beating around the bush, but this can just as easily be seen with all of the examples of great faith that are found in **Hebrews 11**. Abel knew of God's desires for his sacrifices and he was willing to do as God asked. Noah knew of God's promises and it caused him to act upon such knowledge by building the ark. Abraham trusted and believed in God's promises by getting up and going to the land he had never been before. These examples and others from **Hebrews 11** show us that true faith begins in the mind and it is proven in the way that one lives and acts. The true one saving faith of the Bible is one that involves both the mind and the body. So where can one find that which we must know, understand, and believe?

### C. Faith must be rooted in God's Word.

1. Again taking into consideration what we read in **Hebrews 11**, these individuals knew what God desired of them and that was a result of God telling them. They were able to have faith in God because He had communicated His will toward them. We can assume this was done with Adam, but we actually see the communication taking place between Noah and God in **Genesis 6** and God's conversation with Abraham in **Genesis 12**. Their faiths were rooted in God's words revealed to them and the very same thing is true of us in a sense.
2. The Letter to the Romans focuses from beginning to end around the idea of being able to be obedient in faith to God. **Romans 1:5** & **Romans 16:26** both focus on the need for such a thing to be present within the lives of disciples. Well, if one is to have the one true saving faith that is described in this letter, then how does he or she come to the knowledge that leads to faith? Paul addresses this very thing in **Romans 10**. Beginning in **v.8** and going through **v.18**, we read of Paul's recognition of the words of Christ being the beginning point of faith. It is summed up very clearly in **v.17** when Paul states, "*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*" Where are Christ's words contained? They can be found in the very books we are all holding in our hands right now.
3. If we want to have the one true saving faith that unites us all in God then we must all meet at the Bible and go from there. If something within our faith can't be found in this book then we cannot say that it is a part of the one true saving faith that unites all believers in God. This is where the world greatly misses on the idea that different faiths are fine and all leading to the same place. This simply isn't true because so many of the faiths that are accepted today cannot be found in God's Word. True faith only comes from hearing the words of God and Christ. The one true faith is not and cannot be built upon the thoughts and wisdom of men. The one true faith of **Ephesians 4:5** is only built upon God's wisdom and if we want to possess such a faith then we must begin and end at the Word of God. Some people might not see this as being that big of a deal, but the reality is that possessing such a faith is of the utmost importance.

## II. Why Is Faith Important?

### A. Without faith we cannot be pleasing to God.

1. We were stepping all around the verse in some previous points, but right now let's consider the words of the Hebrew Writer in regards to what he thought about the importance of the faith that he defined for us in **Hebrews 11:1**. In **v.6** he writes, "*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*"

2. Coming to possess the one true faith that Paul speaks of in **Ephesians 4:5** is so important because without that faith we will not be able to please God. Without believing that there is a true living God who resides in heaven that created the world and has given us life, we cannot be pleasing to Him. Without understanding that God has desires of His creation, we cannot be pleasing to Him. Without seeking to fulfill the desires that God has of us, we cannot be pleasing to Him.
  3. All of this should be abundantly clear to us as we consider the numerous characters of faith that are seen throughout this chapter. All 17 named and innumerable unnamed individuals of faith *"gained approval through their faith."* (**Hebrews 11:39**) Their willingness to listen to God's desires and obey them, even in extremely difficult circumstances (**Hebrews 11:32-38**), gained them approval and it will do just the same for us. Our possessing the one faith is imperative!
- B. A lack of faith leaves us spiritually weakened and vulnerable.**

1. The bottom line is that each of the individuals mentioned here in **Hebrews 11** wouldn't be here if they were lacking in faith. This is because a lack of faith equates to a lack of conviction and confidence. If we are lacking confidence that God is truly there and with us...if we are lacking conviction in our beliefs of what God expects of us...then we more than likely are not going to find ourselves willing to go through anything remotely close to what the examples of faith here in **Hebrews 11** and elsewhere were willing to go through. No one is going to be willing to suffer in this life for a God we don't even believe is real. No one is going to be willing to take a stand for some truth they aren't actually convinced is true. No one is going to resist the enticements and temptations of the devil if we aren't confident that our standing for righteousness is actually going to lead to a reward for us in the next life. The simple truth is that our lack of true faith only leaves us in a position where we can fall and fail.
2. If being someone who is spiritually weak and vulnerable who is destined for spiritual failure doesn't sound good to you, then let me suggest that we take not just possessing the one true faith seriously, but that we also take seriously our growing in such a faith. In Peter's second letter, we read of his admonitions that disciples build upon their faiths moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. (**II Peter 2:5-7**) If we are willing to grow our faith in this manner, then we can have confidence that we won't be spiritually weak and vulnerable, but instead we will never stumble. Even better is the fact that we will be given an entrance into the eternal kingdom that is prepared for us in heaven! We will be counted among those great characters of faith in **Hebrews 11** because we have worked hard to develop a faith within ourselves that is growing and thriving. The reward and the disasters avoided only add to the importance of coming to have the one true faith.

While many in the world are willing to promote and accept many different forms of faith, the Bible speaks of their being only one true faith that is founded upon confidence and conviction in God that leads to proper action and obedience to God's known will. We have seen that this is so important because we will only be saved through a proper knowledge and obedience to God and His will. Thankfully, He wants for us to be saved and has made His will abundantly known and clear to us. If we will only humble ourselves to accept His will then we will be pleasing to Him and gain approval as the men of old did so long ago. May God bless us and help us to come to possess this one true faith and that we be strengthened in it day by day as we strive to be pleasing to Him in all things.