The Life of Faith

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."
Hebrews 10:38

"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."
Hebrews 11:6

Preliminary reading:
Numbers 13-14
Psalm 95
Hebrews 11

Introduction:
1. If we are to please God, have a successful life, and secure our eternal inheritance, we must live by faith.
2. The Christian life is a life of faith – and this faith is much more than mere belief, but rather confident action.
3. Faith knows only one direction – forward. If you backslide or wander from truth and joy, it is a lack of faith.
4. Faith is key to enjoying today's worship, a happy marriage, success on the job, and facing death confidently.
5. This message is incredibly basic and simple, but the fact is that most Christians have wavering faith. Shame!
6. If the pastor has to preach an elementary sermon as to a nursery, it is because most Christians are like babies.
7. If faith comes by hearing, and hearing by preaching the word of God, then preaching about faith should work!
8. The O.T. is not primarily for children, but for adults to build faith by examples (Romans 15:4; I Cor 10:1-11).
9. Jesus once asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8.) Yes! Us!
10. Faith is not something we need to learn: it is something we need to exercise. Today is to set our resolve!
11. Afflictions and trials are coming. Are you ready for them? Strong faith will not faint in adversity (Pr 24:10).
12. If church members had strong faith, their pastor's work would be made easier and he could lead them higher.
13. Strong faith (a) keeps God's commandments, (b) believes every word of God, and (c) trusts His promises.

What is Faith?

A. Faith is strong confidence in the existence and precepts and promises of God (Hebrews 11:1,3,6).
   1. Faith believes God so strongly that things hoped for become real and the invisible becomes seen!
   2. Faith trusts the revelation of God so absolutely that it understands the creation of the universe!
   3. Faith goes to God with supreme confidence in His existence and reward of diligent obedience!
   4. See that faith is for (a) coming to God, (b) the way to seek God, and (c) confidence of reward.
   5. Abraham had great faith – he confidently believed promises seeming impossible (Rom 4:17-21).
   6. Peter had little faith – he became frightened quickly when he saw the storm (Matthew 14:28-31).

B. True faith is much more than bare belief, for it results in action (Gal 5:6; I Thes 1:3; James 2:14-26).
   1. God has called us to a life of active obedience by faith, not bare belief (Eccl 12:13; Eph 2:10).
   2. Boaz blessed Ruth for noble deeds and promised God's reward, all for her faith (Ruth 2:11-12).
   3. All the persons in Hebrews 11 are listed for some great action brought out because of their faith.

C. Faith believes every word of God without question or compromise (Ps 119:128; Is 8:20; I Tim 6:20).
   1. We like the saying, "God said it, I believe it, that settles it," but the middle clause is worthless.
   2. Not only should we happily preach and defend every word, we must believe and obey each one!
   3. Faith believes the Bible of (a) what He has done, (b) what we should do, and (c) what He will do.

Faith is Important

A. Faith pleases God, and you cannot please God without faith: consider Enoch and faith (Heb 11:5-6).
B. All the heroes and heroines of faith pleased God and received a good report by faith (Heb 11:2,39).
C. Love is greater than faith, for the word of God declares it (I Cor 13:13). But faith is the foundation!
D. We live and walk by faith, not sight (II Cor 4:18; 5:7). Therefore, we act different than any others.

Faith Illustrated and Applied

A. The Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 was given to show us how the elders of Israel were great by faith.
B. Abel rejected the peer pressure of his older brother and obeyed God's word in worship (Heb 11:4).
   1. Do you allow the pressure of others, especially family, to compromise your faith? Get strong!
   2. The true worship of God, the more excellent way, is found by faith in God, not man's approval.
C. Enoch pleased God by faith so much that God simply took him straight to heaven (Heb 11:5).
   1. Are you more concerned about pleasing God, or pleasing a spouse, friends, coworkers, or self?
   2. There is only one way to know you are pleasing God, by obeying God's precepts in the Bible.
D. Noah chose to believe a severe warning and reject popular opinion to save his family (Heb 11:7).
   1. Can you read the warning about ignoring your child and choose God's wisdom (Prov 29:15)?
   2. We live in the perilous times of the last days, and you should save your family (II Tim 3:1 – 4:5).
   3. Does your faith condemn the world and its things to be an heir of heaven (Gal 6:14; James 4:4)?
E. Abraham was willing to end his peaceful life and follow God to some unknown place (Heb 11:8).
   1. There are commandments that we must trust by faith and do them without knowing the end.
   2. When a wife fully submits to her husband, she does not know for sure where it will take her.
F. Sarah trusted God, after a momentary lapse in faith, that He could do the impossible (Heb 11:11).
   1. You may have no hope in your marriage, in a child, or in something else. But God is most able!
   2. In spite of a weak faith at times, if you repent and trust Him wholly, He can and will reward you!
G. Abraham and his family were sojourners in Canaan without receiving the promises (Heb 11:13).
   1. How long are you willing to wait? Do you get impatient when God does not answer right away?
   2. He will wait a long time to answer some prayers to build our faith. Other answers are in heaven!
H. Abraham was willing to trust God even in a matter that he thought was against His will (Heb 11:17).
   1. God had promised Isaac to be Abraham's promised seed, but Abraham was willing to kill him.
   2. You might be confident that some choice you made was God's will. Can you obey a new call?
I. Moses knew that God's reward in this life and the next exceeded anything in Egypt (Heb 11:24-26).
   1. Can you forsake the things of the world and exalt the spiritual things of God and His people?
   2. Moses valued affliction over pleasure and reproach over treasures, for he believed God's reward.
   3. Faith cannot be bought! If you have true faith in God, then you will lose your life to find it!
J. Moses defied the King of Egypt and led a helpless band of saints into the wilderness (Heb 11:27).
   1. Are you willing to face great opposition without worrying about consequences to please God?
   2. It requires you to be like Moses and see Him Who is invisible, for there will not be human help.
K. Moses kept the first Passover, which was a new and strange act of worship in total faith (Heb 11:28).
   1. Are you so strong in diligently seeking God that you will keep His ordinances without question?
   2. Is your faith so committed to the words of God that you will do the strange things it may require?
L. Israel was willing to trust God's open door through the very frightening Red Sea (Heb 11:29).
   1. God may open a door for you in an area of your life. Are you willing to go through a fearful one?
   2. You may face a situation you have never seen or heard of before, but faith will begin walking!
M. Israel believed God's words to march around Jericho without seeing or understanding (Heb 11:30).
   1. There will surely be times when you do not know what to do but to pray and trust the great God.
   2. When you pray once, twice, thrice, and nothing happens, do you have faith that He will answer?
N. Rahab was not discouraged or unbelieving because she had spent her life as a prostitute (Heb 11:31).
   1. Your past sins do not mean anything, if you repent of them and come to God by faith in Christ.
   2. You may know that your sins are equal to or worse than reprobates around you. Believe anyway!
O. Gideon was willing to face numberless Midianites even with a greatly reduced army (Heb 11:32).
   1. In order to build your faith, God may take away from you the things in which you were trusting.
   2. Remember Jacob wrestling with God; his thigh went out of joint first, and things looked bleak.
P. Can you crush personal choices and ease, like Daniel, to stand by faith on God's word (Dan 1:8)?
   1. The easy way out in marriage is to do the least required, but faith calls on you to obey the Bible.
   2. If you think you will never get ahead professionally being godly, then you need to read the Bible.

Q. The twelve spies give us a great example of how most are faithless and few faithful (Num 13-14).
   1. The nation had no faith in God in spite of many miracles, so they desired spies (Deut 1:22-23).
   2. When confronted with a fearful and unwilling church, ten compromised and two stayed faithful.
   3. Most got emotional, blamed Moses, lied about Egypt, preferred dying, and wanted a new leader.
   4. The four leaders exhorted them to faith in God, but the crazy crowd wanted to stone them.
   5. The Lord threatened to destroy them all; Moses interceded; God promised glory in judgment.
   6. God killed the faithless spies, swore to kill the rest, and chose to let them wander for forty years.
   7. The rebels thought they could remedy it by a little change, but without God they were beaten.
   8. Caleb and Joshua defied the other spies and went against the entire nation of fearful unbelievers.
   9. David wrote about it, and Paul and Stephen used it against the Jews (Ps 95; Acts 7,13; Heb 3-4).

Conclusion:

1. Faith rejects sin and temptation, will only do things God's way, and fully believes every promise of Scripture.
2. Faith will be tried, because the blessed God (a) wants to see it in action and (b) make it perfect by adversity.
3. Are you committed against personal preferences, opposition, feelings, tradition, difficulties, the unknown, fear, questions, popular opinion, slothfulness, and lethargy to be a diligent seeker of the Lord Jesus Christ?
4. Are you committed to diligently seeking the Lord and obeying Him, even if all hell breaks loose in your life?
5. A good report, and blessings now and in eternity, are lay hold of by believing and obeying God fully! Do it!
6. If you lack faith this morning, then it should be your chief concern to go to God asking for more (Luke 17:5).

For further study:

1. The sermon outline, "Enduring Affliction," which shows the role and duty of faith in troubles.
2. The sermon outline, "Ass's Heads and Dove's Dung," uses Bible history to build faith.
3. The sermon outline, "Two Spies," which focuses on the events of Numbers 13-14.
4. The sermon outline, "Faith or Feelings," teaching how to make decisions by faith.