The Life of Faith – II

Introduction:

1. If we are to please God, have a successful life, and secure our eternal inheritance, we must live by faith.
2. Controversial subjects from creation to capital punishment to the Bible version controversy require faith.
3. Last Lord's Day we studied Romans 4:17-21 and the character of true faith in light of God's promises.
4. The Christian life is a life of faith – and this faith is much more than mere belief, but rather confident action.
5. Faith knows only one direction – forward. If you backslide or wander from truth or joy, it is a lack of faith.
6. Faith is key to enjoying today's worship, a happy marriage, success on the job, and facing death confidently.
7. This message is incredibly basic and simple, but the fact is that most Christians have wavering faith. Shame!
8. If faith comes by hearing, and hearing by preaching the word of God, then preaching about faith should work!
9. The O.T. is not primarily for children, but for adults to build faith by examples (Romans 15:4; I Cor 10:1-11).
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) trusts His promises, (b) believers every word of God, and (c) keeps his commandments.

What is Faith?

A. Hebrews 11:1 and 11:6 give us a wonderful definition for this word and concept that is so important.
B. Faith takes God's promises that are the basis for our greatest hopes and turns them into reality.
C. Faith takes God's declarations of invisible events and things and turns them into certain evidence.
D. Faith takes God's commandments and makes them clearly the most important matters of life.
E. Faith is the basis of our religion (Rom 1:17). The ability for faith comes by regeneration (II Pet 1:1).
F. Faith is brought to action and exercised by hearing things from God's word to believe (Rom 10:17).
G. Faith is increased and perfected by difficulties, which require a greater reliance on God (Jas 1:2-4).
H. Faith is the only way to please God, as it was the means that Enoch used to please Him (Heb 11:5-6).
I. Faith is how we come to God to be His true worshippers; no outward actions will suffice (Heb 11:6).
J. Faith rests on two things – God's existence and His faithfulness to reward obedience (Heb 11:6).
K. But faith exerts itself diligently, for it knows that God will mock halfhearted efforts (Heb 11:6).
L. Faith believes every word of God without question or compromise (Ps 119:128; Is 8:20; I Tim 6:20).
M. We like: "God said it, I believe it, that settles it," but the middle clause is not necessary (Rom 3:3-4).
N. Yet the middle clause describes our faith, for without it God's words are personally worthless.

Faith Illustrated and Applied

A. The Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 shows us how the elders of Israel were great by faith (Heb 11:2,39).
    1. These are God's heroes, and they should be our heroes. Their good report is from God Himself!
    2. These illustrious heroes of the true worship of God are in heaven waiting for us (Heb 12:23).
    3. They were men and women just like us, with weak faith and sinful failures at times (James 5:17).
B. Here is faith described from the creation of the world to the time of the New Testament (Heb 11:3).
    1. Creation is one of the great example subjects of how faith operates regarding unseen phenomena.
    2. Paul is taking his readers back to the very beginning, not just back to Abraham (Hebrews 10:38).
    3. Do you confidently believe all that the Bible declares, from creation to the existence of heaven?
C. Abel rejected the peer pressure of his older brother and obeyed God's word in worship (Heb 11:4).
    1. Cain likely did not change from a peace loving man to such a violent murderer in just one day, which means that Abel knew Cain was going to be upset with him about a different offering.
    2. Proper worship done in fear of God proves righteousness i.e. singing versus organ or rock band!
    3. Do you allow the pressure of others, especially family, to compromise your faith? Get strong!
    4. The true worship of God, the more excellent way, is found by faith in God, not man's approval.
    5. It does not matter if everyone worships in some newfangled way. God's way is the only way!

D. Enoch pleased God by faith so much that God simply took him straight to heaven (Heb 11:5-6).
   1. Enoch lived from 1004 to 669 years before the Flood, when the world was very wicked.
   2. But he stood out in his generation, because he had chosen a lifestyle by faith that pleased God.
   3. Are you more concerned about pleasing God, or pleasing a spouse, friends, coworkers, or self?
   4. There is only one way to know you are pleasing God, by obeying God's precepts in the Bible.
   5. God may not translate you to heaven, like He did Enoch, but He can see you through death.

E. Noah chose to believe a severe warning and reject popular opinion to save his family (Heb 11:7).
   1. Noah had never seen anything like a worldwide flood, but that did not slow him down at all.
   2. Do you fear the warnings of Scripture, even if you have not felt or seen the judgment before?
   3. Can you read the warning about ignoring your child and choose God's wisdom (Prov 29:15)?
   4. We live in the perilous times of the last days, and you should save your family (II Tim 3:1 – 4:5).
   5. Does your faith condemn the world and its things to be an heir of heaven (Gal 6:14; James 4:4)?

F. Abraham was willing to end his peaceful life and follow God to some unknown place (Heb 11:8).
   1. Abraham went out of Chaldea not knowing where he was going, living a nomad his entire life.
   2. He had to live in tents for the rest of his life … 100 years … by faith in something coming later.
   3. No wonder heaven is called Abraham's bosom, because he waited 100 years for it and is there!
   4. There are commandments that we must trust by faith and do them without knowing the end.
   5. When a wife fully submits to her husband, she does not know for sure where it will take her.

G. Sarah trusted God, after a momentary lapse in faith, that He could do the impossible (Heb 11:11).
   1. The examples of momentarily weak faith are comforting to us, as is Elijah (James 5:17).
   2. You may have no hope in your marriage, in a child, or in something else. But God is most able!
   3. In spite of a weak faith at times, if you repent and trust Him wholly, He can and will reward you!

H. Abraham and his family were sojourners in Canaan without receiving the promises (Heb 11:13).
   1. They died in faith, still believing God would keep His promises. Are you ready to die by faith?
   2. They saw the promises afar off – by faith – even when they could not see anything naturally.
   3. They were persuaded of the promises; they loved them; and they changed their lives by them.
   4. How long are you willing to wait? Do you get impatient when God does not answer right away?
   5. He will wait a long time to answer some prayers to build our faith. Other answers are in heaven!

I. 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. We consider death to be absolutely certain and final, but it is not to the God of heaven!
   3. Can you trust God through death like Abraham trusted God to remedy the death of Isaac?
   4. You might be confident that some choice you made was God's will. Can you obey a new call?

J. Moses knew that God's reward in this life and the next exceeded anything in Egypt (Heb 11:24-26).
   1. Moses saw a reward coming much later that far outshone anything Egypt could offer him?
   2. Can you forsake the things of the world and exalt the spiritual things of God and His people?
   3. Moses valued affliction over pleasure and reproach over treasures, for he believed God's reward.
   4. Faith cannot be bought! If you have true faith in God, then you will lose your life to find it!

K. Moses defied the King of Egypt and led a helpless band of saints into the wilderness (Heb 11:27).
   1. He could see the invisible God with Him, so he was not fearful of Pharaoh's wrath or power.
   2. Are you willing to face great opposition without worrying about consequences to please God?
   3. It requires you to be like Moses and see Him Who is invisible, for there will not be human help.

L. Moses kept the first Passover, which was a new and strange act of worship in total faith (Heb 11:28).
   1. This was a new act of worship on God's words only, and how could lamb blood on doors work?
   2. Are you so strong in diligently seeking God that you will keep His ordinances without question?
   3. Is your faith so committed to the words of God that you will do the strange things it may require?

M. Israel was willing to trust God's open door through the very frightening Red Sea (Heb 11:29).
   1. Here is another example of weak faith, but they did run down into the Sea and cross under water.
   2. God may open a door for you in an area of your life. Are you willing to go through a fearful one?

3. You may face a situation you have never seen or heard of before, but faith will begin walking!

N. Israel believed God's words to march around Jericho without seeing or understanding (Heb 11:30).
   1. This is an absurd way to fight a war. The taunts of the enemy would have been great. There is no natural explanation for how the city would be taken.
   2. There will surely be times when you do not know what to do but to pray and trust the great God.
   3. When you pray once, twice, thrice, and nothing happens, do you have faith that He will answer?

O. 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!

P. 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.

Q. Barak took only 10,000 troops from two insignificant tribes to face an enormous army under Sisera.

R. Samson was bound with ropes, slew 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, and then got water.

S. Jephthah was a bastard son by a prostitute, but he boldly took a modest army and defeated an enemy.

T. David showed great faith through many crises from Saul, from the Philistines, and from his family.

U. Samuel was faithful to God though Eli was not and though the nation demanded a king instead.

V. Can you crush personal choices and ease, like Daniel, to stand by faith on God's word (Dan 1:8)?
   1. Daniel is here with others, not by name, but by accomplishment, "stopped the mouths of lions."
   2. The easy way out in marriage is to do the least required, but faith calls on you to obey the Bible.
   3. If you think you will never get ahead professionally being godly, then you need to read the Bible.

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 laid 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).
7. If you feel very weak in faith, then pray with the lunatick's father, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."

For further study:

1. The sermon outline, "The Life of Faith – I," which uses Romans 4:17-21 to teach the logic of faithful thinking.
2. The sermon outline, "Enduring Affliction," which shows the role and duty of faith in patiently dealing with troubles.
3. The sermon outline, "Ass's Heads and Dove's Dung," uses Bible history to build faith through God's great deliverance.
4. The sermon outline, "Two Spies," which focuses on the events of Numbers 13-14 and the two spies against the nation.
5. The sermon outline, "Faith or Feelings," teaches how to make decisions by faith without letting feelings pervert faith.
6. The sermon outline, "Making Wise Decisions," which compares decisions by fleece, feelings, fortune, or faith.