

A Question of Faith

Hebrews 11:1-6

1/14/07

Intro

The book of Hebrews was written to strengthen the faith of the readers who were considering leaving their faith and reverting back to the Judaism they came from.

They had suffered such hardship, trial and persecution because of their faith that they considered it easier to go back from where they came.

But the writer keeps drawing them back to their faith and challenges them to “Consider Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

He wants their faith to endure; God wants our faith to endure as well, so this book is for us as well.

These verses we are studying today are some of the best verses about faith in the whole bible. Here faith is defined for us like in no other place in the bible. We are encouraged by it to be strong in our faith and persevere in the conviction and assurance of what we believe.

These are principles and insights faith that will strengthen and encourage us to have a faith that endures.

I. Have Assurance in Faith

- It's essential we understand what faith is since it's what we stand on. But first, we should understand what it is not.

A. Faith is not positive thinking

- Many confused about what it means to have faith. So we begin by understanding what faith is not.
- Faith is not positive thinking, faith is not a hunch that you rely on; faith is not hoping that everything will turn out all right in the end, faith is not optimism, and faith is not exuberance.

Illus- There are so many books on positive thinking, but the foundation of this is in the power of the thinking itself.

Illus – Nor is it exuberance. Once a mediocre high school football team found themselves facing off against last year's state champion; a local car dealer met with the team and offered them each a car if they won!!

- Faith is more than just believing that God exists.

Illus – Even the demons believe that much, but it does them no good.

James 2:19, You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

B. Faith is assurance in God's character

- The word for assurance (substance in the King James) in the Greek means “**setting under.**” In other words, it is what is under us, we can stand on it!!
- God wants us to have the assurance that God is for us and that God is with us.

Illus – It’s the opposite of Eeyore’s approach to life.

Hebrews 10:34-36, For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance,

Hebrews 7:25, Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

II Chronicles 16:9, For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

- The key is confidence in the faithfulness of God.

Hebrews 10:23, Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

- Whether we can understand it or not, God is a merciful and gracious God abounding in love toward us who believe.

Ephesians 1:18-19, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Illus – Having faith in God’s character is so much better than putting faith in people because people will let you down—they don’t have the character of God. I was at Costco and couldn’t wait to taste a sample of Philly steak sandwich...

C. Faith is the conviction of things not seen

- First, there is conviction –

Illus – In a courtroom, it would mean being convinced of someone’s guilt of innocence because of the persuasive evidence.

II Timothy 1:12, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

- Of things unseen – We weren’t there when the world was made, therefore, we consider the evidence and become convinced that it was created by God or not.

Illus – Vs 3 – The things which are seen are made from the things which do not appear. That is an amazing statement that has much more meaning now that we know that everything is made from energy. The atom is made of tiny particles of energy!

- There is a substance to our faith because of what God has already done for us. We see the world that He has created, and we know that He raised Christ from the dead as evidence of His power for me.

- It is a conviction even when *what* I see with my eyes discourages me.

Habakkuk 3:17-19, Though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength,

II. Live to Please God

- By faith the men of old gained the approval of God. Faith is something God definitely wants us to have and he is very pleased when he sees a man or woman who has enduring faith.

A. Walk with God and faith will increase

- Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death. He was taken up because he had received the testimony that he was pleasing to God.

Genesis 5:21-24, Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

- What was interesting is that the world was very corrupt when Enoch lived. He definitely was not going the way the world was; he walked with God.

- Enoch is also a picture of the church in that in the same way that Enoch was taken up before the wrath of God was revealed in the flood, the church will be taken up before the wrath of God in the tribulation, the period of seven years of the wrath of God upon a corrupt and unbelieving world.

- The more you walk with God the more you have a longing to be near the Lord, for His soon return.

Hebrews 11:16, But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

App – What a beautiful picture for us; walking with someone is closeness, relationship and you can see why God would be pleased with that. Enoch walked with God and was so close that God just drew him up to Himself.

B. Don't please yourself

- Seeking our own pleasure is the surest way not to find it.
- Pleasure is not the result of seeking pleasure; it is the result of seeing God.

Illus – Solomon is the picture of self-pleasing. He took it to lengths that would be impossible for us, and in the end, it did not bring him any pleasure.

Illus – It is said that Alexander the Great, when he had conquered all the known world, sat down and cried because there was nothing more to conquer. It was

not enough, there is no satisfaction in things, or achievement, or status.

Illus - We have a phrase that captures the point perfectly. It is, “Been there, done that.” In other words, I’ve already experienced that, now what?

I became a certified scuba diver when I was younger and it was a lot of fun to see what was under the water. Then a friend then told me that after he dove in the pacific islands, he could never dive in the NW again.

But God is infinite in glory and aspect of every quality of His character; we will never come to the end of discovering who He is and never ceased to be amazed. Our soul is not satisfied by such things.

- Jesus us our great example in this.

John 8:28-30, So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

C. Diligently seek Him

- God rewards those who diligently seek Him.
- There is an active, rather than a passive aspect to what he is saying here. God wants us to be active in our relationship with Him.

- In other words, God wants us to invest our heart and our lives in our relationship with Him.

Illus – A relationship doesn’t work unless you’ve invested your heart in it.

Those whose lives are blessed are those who realize that God enjoys our company and desires relationship with us.

There is a great difference between seeking to please God and seeking to avoid His displeasure.

Psalm 27:4, 8, One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple... When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You, “Your face, O Lord, I shall seek.”

Conclusion

Faith is an absolutely essential part of our relationship with the Lord. Without it, we cannot please the Lord and with it, we are blessed beyond our imagination.