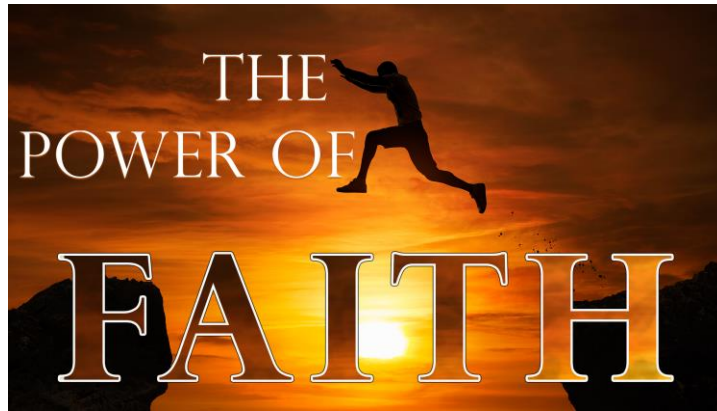

This morning we are excited to start our new sermon series: "The Power of Faith."



I believe this could be one of the most important sermon series I've ever preached. Why? Because *faith is the backbone* and the essence of what it takes to be saved. In fact, as we know and believe, faith in Jesus has the power to deliver our souls from death to life. The Bible says, "**For by grace are you saved through *faith*.**" Indeed, faith in Jesus has the power to take our spirit from this earth, at our death, and transport us through the atmosphere to the halls of heaven. That's POWER church family! The power of faith!!

This morning we begin our series by asking the question: "What is Faith?" And we're going to seek to answer that today as we look at what is often called by Bible Scholars, "The Hall of Faith." Throughout this chapter we're going to literally go back in time all the way to Adam and Eve and work our way up to the first century and see people who lived BY FAITH. In fact, if you scan down in your Bible through Hebrews chapter 11, you see that phrase "by faith" 19 times. I think it's pretty important, don't you? **Let's see the first three verses...**

Hebrews 11:1-3

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Faith. What is FAITH? Now, I'll tell you this...what we just read is NOT a definition of faith, but rather a description of faith...what it does and how it works. So, perhaps the best way to begin in trying to determine: WHAT IS FAITH, is talk about what faith is and what faith isn't.

Listen carefully, faith is not blind. Sometimes people talk about having "blind faith." Well, that's not the faith being described. It's not blind optimism or some "hope so" kind of feeling. And what is more...**biblical faith** is more than just an intellectual assent to a bunch of Christian doctrines. It's not just believing in something in SPITE of the evidence at hand, because that would be superstition.

I like how Warren Wiersbe describes faith. He just passed away earlier this month...

"True Biblical Faith is confident obedience to God's Word in spite of circumstances and consequences. We trust His Word and act on it no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be. The circumstances might seem impossible and the consequences frightening and unknown; but we obey God's Word just the same and

believe Him to do what is right and what is best. Faith is not some feeling we manufacture. Faith is only as good as it's object, and the object of our faith is God! Therefore, faith is having trust in what God has revealed in His Word by way of His promises that will never fail." Warren Wiersbe, Bible Commentator

I like what he said!! **Faith is only as good as it's object.** Let me ask you some questions in relation to that. If I'm your object...do you have faith in me? Do you have faith in your spouse? How about your employer? How about your doctor? How about your favorite restaurant? I mean, you are trusting them not to poison you, right? The same is true of your water company, right? Or Coca Cola, Mtn. Dew or your favorite drink. We have faith in a lot of things. You have faith in a pilot you've never met when you get on a plane. You have faith in the company that produces your headache medicine...Tylenol, Excedrin, Advil, right?

Think about this...if you are a Christian...a follower of Jesus...then you are placing your eternal destiny, by faith, into someone's hands you've never seen. You are trusting in someone you've never touched or seen with your human eyes; and yet, you trust Him. Remember Thomas...



Poor ole Thomas. I feel a lot like him sometimes... He said he wouldn't believe until he saw Jesus' nail-prints with his own eyes. Well, he got that chance didn't he...and Jesus said, "Thomas..."

John 20:27-29

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

That's us! Those who believe and haven't seen. What's that called? Faith. But, it's not blind faith. Do you want to know why? Because we have evidence. We know Jesus Christ was on this earth. That's a historical fact and we also have His Word (the Bible)...which reveals Him to us in black and white and we have the evidence of the Holy Spirit living inside of us Who bears witness with our spirit that we are His children. Charles Spurgeon, the great preacher said this:

"Faith is laying hold of Jesus. It is not something mysterious at all. It is that which looks to the Lord Jesus Christ and the evidence of what He did by His death, burial and resurrection." Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 18th century pastor, theologian

Listen, did you know that we actually get more faith in Jesus by being here...did you know that...

Romans 10:17

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

We grow in our faith when we hear about Jesus! This is why we need to be here. It's like this...



When you are here...you are growing in your faith because you are hearing about Jesus! It's like pumping air into a balloon. That's what's happening when you are here...air is going into your faith balloon. That's why, when you are going through a hard time...struggling in your faith...the last thing you need to do is skip church. You need to be here to get air into your faith balloon!

No...the faith we have in Jesus is not "blind faith," it's a "reasoned, informed faith." Let's see together now...

Hebrews 11:1

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

I want you to focus with me on the words "assurance and conviction." These two words are the key to understanding Biblical faith. Let's take the first word: **assurance**... The Greek word means this:



That's the foundation of house. They are backfilling around it. Eventually, it will look like this...

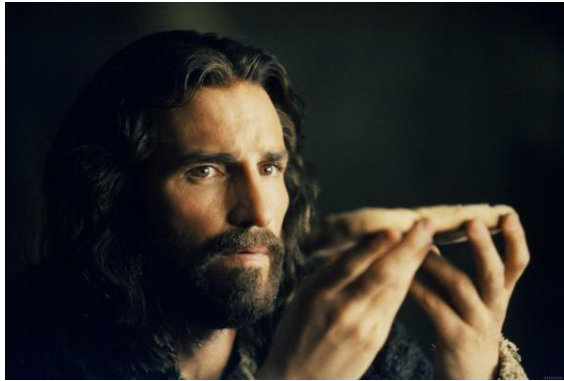


Do you think that house is going anywhere? Why? Because it has such a strong foundation. That's the word: ASSURANCE in verse 1. "Faith is the assurance, the foundation."

Now think with me in the context of the book of Hebrews. What had been the foundation for those first-century Jews, up to the point of learning who Jesus was and what He did for them? What was their foundation?



What is that? That's the Temple. That's their foundation. That's Judaism...that's the pinnacle of what they believe... Everything culminated at the Temple. The High Priest was there, the ark of the covenant was there, the sacrifices were made there and God was there inside the Holy of Holies. And now they're being told to chuck all of that, because that's no longer their foundation... They've now been told that they have a better High Priest, one who died for your sins...One who became the sacrificial lamb, the One who said, "It is finished," and 2000 feet away from Mt. Calvary in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, that curtain that separated mankind from God was torn into...AND that was the end of the sacrificial system and the old covenant...because a new covenant had been established by Him...



Jesus, the One whose body was broken for you and whose blood was shed for you (we celebrated this last week with communion) the One who said: “I am the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through me.”

Oh, but this was a huge change, wasn't it? The Jews were used to a “works-based system,” and now it's a “grace-based system.” But, here's the question that arises about the Old Testament saints under the old covenant...did they get saved? Yes. How? Same way...faith...belief... Listen, God does not save people by works...He never has...and He never will. God saves people by faith. Remember, “For by grace you are saved through faith.”

I want you to think with me about Abraham... Abraham, the main guy for the Jews. The Father of their faith. So, how was he saved? He lived before Jesus. How was he saved? By faith...belief...trust in God. Watch...

Romans 4:1-3

¹ What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

Jump down to verse 9.

Romans 4:9-12

⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

No... Salvation doesn't come by way of works, it comes by way of FAITH! That's the foundation...the assurance of our hope! That's the first part of verse 1. Now the second part...the second word...

Hebrews 11:1

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Conviction. That word in the Greek means: “Something that is proved or tested.” In other words, you can't be convicted in a court of law without evidence and you can't be confident in something or someone without testing or proving that the thing or person being “counted on” is trustworthy.

Listen, what do you have conviction about? Is there a certain product swear by? For me it's Duke's Mayo!



It tastes good on my sandwiches and that's all I want!

Conviction comes from evidence... Church, what is our evidence for faith in God? The Word of God. This book was given to us by God and is the manifestation of the fact that Jesus Christ came to the world. And it's through this book that we have the historical accounts of God's revelation of who He is and what He does. And let me remind us about the reliability and conviction we can have in this book: there has never been a single date, time, person, place or event that's ever been disproved in the Bible. John MacArthur is right:

“The Bible is all that we need. We don't need a new vision. We don't need a new revelation. We need not listen for a new voice from heaven. The Scriptures are complete as given.”
John MacArthur, pastor, theologian

And I agree with him wholeheartedly...now watch this... We can trust the Bible with CONVICTION because the Bible has been proved and tested. We can take God at His Word! Let me offer an example to try to apply this. Would you walk across this footbridge?



That's a footbridge in the country of Laos. I doubt it. I don't think I would either. I have no conviction about it. I'd want to test it...wouldn't you? Hey...have you tested Jesus...have you put your faith in Him...your trust...your assurance... Have you found Him to be trustworthy? I have and I have no reservation at all in putting my full weight on Him. I trust Him. And because I trust Him, then I can have faith that whatever comes my way, He will sustain and provide for me. You see...that's trusting Him for what I can't see, based on the evidence of what He's done in the past. I've been across the bridge with Him so many times. Have you?

Listen Christian...you can trust Him for what you can't see in the future as if it's already happened, based on what He's done for you in the past. You can have CONVICTION. That's the end of vs. 1.

Hebrews 11:1

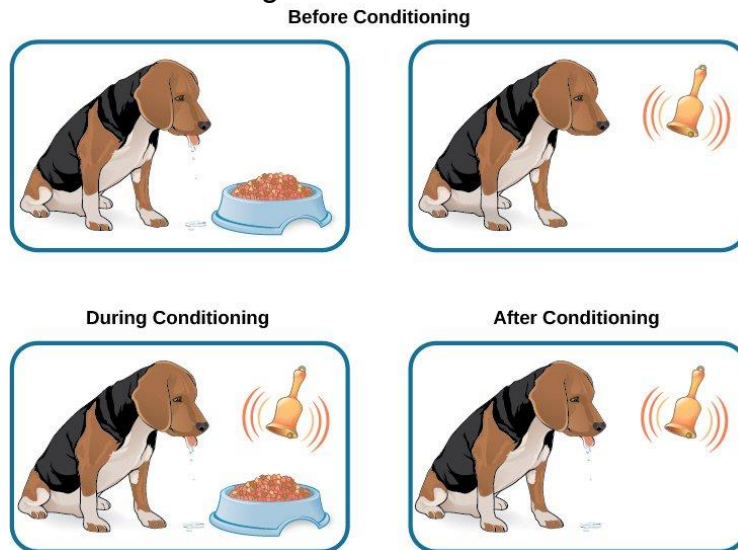
¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

The great missionary, Oswald Sanders, sums it up this way:

“Faith enables the believing soul to trust the future as present and the invisible as seen.”

Oswald Sander, Missionary, (China Inland Mission)

Dear church family, there are a lot of things in my life that I honestly have no idea how they're going to turn out in the future. Honestly, when I think about the future sometimes, it causes me some anxiety AND I can allow that anxiety to drag me through the mud of Satan's doubts. You know what I've learned...I'll feed the doubt or feed the faith. You see, we have to choose to feed our faith, by reminding ourselves of all the Lord has done for us in the past. And so, we can have confidence for the future, right now...before it's even happened, because of the evidence of God's goodness in the past. It's like Pavlov's dog...



He brought his dog food and the dog salivated. He then brought no food, but he rang a bell and the dog did nothing. But, then he rang the bell and brought food and the dog salivated, so that finally, he could simply ring the bell and in expectation of what had happened in the past, the dog salivated, believing food was coming.

How many times has God rung the bell and brought provision for you? He always provides! He's better than Pavlov! Hear the bell and believe...even though you can't see it. It pleases the Lord when we trust Him and have conviction in His goodness. That's Hebrews 11:6.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Do you see? Paul is flipping the paradigm for these Hebrews. They can now come to God on their own, whereas before they had to come to Priest and a temple. Not anymore! You see, Paul had been encouraging these new Christians, who were dealing with such tremendous persecution and such intense trials, that they could come to God and they could trust Him with conviction, and when they do...He rewards that faith. And the cool thing is...Paul goes right into verse 2, using their heroes of the faith to remind them of this. And that's what we're going to see over the next 10

weeks, as we look at the lives of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, David and others. And **that's verse 2.**

Hebrews 11:2

² For by it the people of old received their commendation.

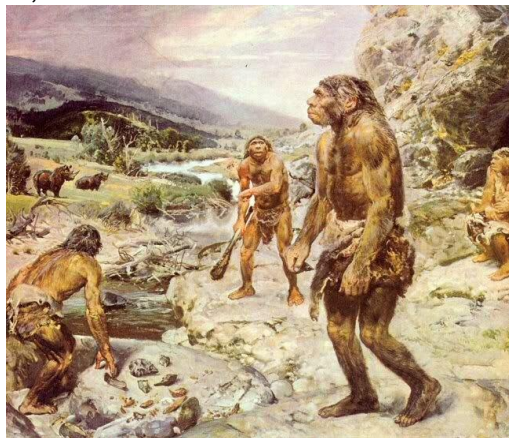
You see, they were commended because of their FAITH! They took God at His word. I think of Noah...



...we'll be coming to him shortly... Here's a guy who was told by God to build a boat and yet, it had never rained on the earth. He worked for 120 years, as people certainly, ridiculed him for his foolishness and utter stupidity (you know that's what they said day after day, year after year), in building a boat in the middle of a desert. But, he did it by faith. He took God at His word. And God saved him and his family. And we'll see this again and again in the weeks to come.

Are you taking God at His word? When it seems what He's asking you to do IS IMPOSSIBLE! Maybe you feel like Noah today. Building a boat in the dessert. Hey...trust the Lord... Trust what He's done for you in the past. Trust the footbridge that He's walked over with you so many times. You can trust Him! Oh, do what He's telling you to do. Yes, it may seem crazy...often times what the Lord asks us to do makes no sense to anyone else. But, when you've heard from the Lord and you know it...then do what He tells you to do BY FAITH, **just like the ancients of old!**

here the Holy Spirit leads Paul to go all the way back to the beginning. This is where we've been on Wednesday nights in our "Genesis Is History" series. In fact, this Wed. night...we're going to be talking about "Prehistoric man." Is that even a term we can use when speaking of Adam? Was Adam prehistoric? In other words, was Adam a caveman? Did he look like this...



Is that Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel? Short answer: **No!** Come Wednesday night and we'll see according to the Bible, why the answer is no! which ties right back into what I just described...

Hebrews 11:3

³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Have you heard of the Latin phrase: Ex Knee-HE-low

Ex nihilo: “out of nothing.”

That’s exactly what we just read in verse 3. God made the heavens and the earth...the entire universe...out of nothing. He spoke everything into existence by His Word. His Word! He didn’t do anything with hands or tools. He spoke it! And that, dear Church, is why we trust His Word! That’s Paul’s point to the first-century believers and it still holds true to us, 21st century believers.

You know, church, I could try to go over all that we’ve talked about over the last 2 months on Wednesday nights about Genesis and the beginning...right here and now...but, we don’t have time...but, might I direct you to our App...or the website and might I tell you that starting tomorrow, you can listen to all of our Sunday messages on Spotify...



You can do that while you walk, or run or do dishes, mow the yard, fold the laundry. How cool is that! I’m grateful for Jacob and Justin and all they do to keep us out there for folks!

Here’s the bottom line...this is verse 3 by way of summary...for those who want to get rid of God, they need a way. That way is Evolution by way of a Big Bang...from goo to you, by way of the zoo, as Matthew shared Wed. night. If you talk about wanting to take a blind leap of faith...you’ll have to do that to believe that everything evolved from one-celled organism.

Folks, it takes more faith to believe in a man’s theory (Darwin) than it does to believe in God’s word, You know the Theory of Evolution is not static. It keeps changing. The time frame keeps changing...the rationality keeps changing...the “science” (I put that in quotes), keeps changing. Don’t tell me the theory of evolution is scientific...it’s not...because it continues to change and true science doesn’t change. Gravity is the same today, just as it was yesterday. What is science? It’s the **systematic study of something by way of observation and experiment, which is repeatable.**

Scientists can’t observe the beginning of time. They can’t repeat that in a lab... So, listen...you can’t call the theory of Evolution nor the Big Bang “science” with any integrity if you want to be truthful about what is true science...because it’s not, because the Big Bang is not observable, nor is it repeatable. It’s a guess...it’s a theory, that’s being used to explain away God.

You know it’s unfortunate, so-called scientists today keep trying to push past what they can actually call science, and instead...they chosen to jump off into fantasy land... into the realm of blind faith... into what they can’t do ...and that is to observe things before they even existed. Only

God can do that...because He was there when He spoke everything into existence by His Word! No! Scientists who believe in the Big Bang can't even tell you and me where the matter came from that supposedly banged! That, my friends, is a leap of blind faith.

Oh...people will believe almost anything to get rid of God, and accountability to Him. And that's why this quote is true... Have you heard it: **"If you tell a lie long enough, loud enough and often enough, it will eventually become truth."**

Listen and we're done...by faith...reasoned faith...faith that Jesus has given you as you have walked across the footbridges of life with Him...faith that you have gotten increased in your faith balloon even today...



you've been getting pumped up...by faith that is as solid as the foundation of a well-built home...faith that gives you assurance, and conviction...oh...by that kind of faith...we, dear Church family, can walk in power and in strength as we look to Jesus...the founder and perfecter of our faith, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
