

I also want to thank everyone for the kind words of love and support from all the pastors.

Each of them would like to get up here and share, but I'm not letting them.

But I don't know if you know this either.

Hunting season started yesterday.

Anybody go out yesterday?

Best season of Montana.

I mean, Montana has five seasons, and hunting season is the best of the seasons.

And I know every hunter was really busy yesterday morning.

Yesterday afternoon, Billy went out last night and said that he heard gunshots everywhere except from where he was.

But that's okay.

Every hunter is full of faith right now that they're going to find that wall-hanging 6-point, 7-point bull.

Hopefully, you've already found it maybe.

Or you're going to find that deer that's just going to complete your collection on your living room wall.

But we have lots of faith.

that it's going to be a good season, especially when it's starting.

And we often associate the word faith with religious practices.

We have many people who talk about faith and they oppose the concept that, well, how are you supposed to believe God just with faith, just to believe something that you can't see, that you can't touch?

How are you going to inherit eternal life just faith?

by believing and most people would say that you know I need proof I need evidence I need scientific evidence stay on track um they they want to see and touch and taste and hear and feel they want to use their senses and and they want to be guided by that and of course we all know the saying seeing is believing or uh you know I won't believe it until I see it I won't believe it till I touch it Thomas was one of those people

But it's fascinating if we take time and think every person utilizes some kind of faith every day, every hour, even every minute sometimes.

You might say, well, how's that?

How many of you before you sat down in your chair inspected it to make sure that it would hold you?

Not one of you did.

You just sat down in faith knowing that, hey, this chair is going to hold me.

So we use faith more than we think we do.

But back to those who scoff at our faith and religion.

You know, a lot of those same people believe that we came from monkeys or that creation started with the Big Bang Theory where nothing magically came together and had a committee and formed something that, you know, just aligned perfectly and had the right reactions and chemical reactions and that little spark and life just wham.

Just evolved.

And then that one little cell of life was smart enough to think, man, I need more than this.

And began to evolve from that until you and I are here.

And I believe sometimes it takes more.

No, I don't believe sometimes.

It takes more faith to believe in that than it does a creator.

Because we are not just happenstance.

But see, the truth is people are willing to put faith anywhere and in anything except for God.

Why?

Because if we are acknowledging that there's a God, we're acknowledging there's a creator, we're acknowledging that we might have a purpose other than just living, breathing, and dying.

And it makes us accountable for our actions and our life.

Because if we're a creator, it ultimately means there's going to be some kind of judgment.

So as we get started this morning, as we get into Hebrews chapter 11, I just want to remind us that the writer did not write this book chapter and verse.

He wrote a letter from start to end.

And so chapter 11 is not a new thought or it's not separated from chapter 10 because most people know Hebrews chapter 11.

It's called the faith chapter.

It starts off with their own faith is the substance of things hoped for.

We know this verse and we know this chapter.

But I want to start this morning to keep the reading, to keep the flow going, reading from verse 38 of chapter 10, just to see how this rolls together.

And he says,

of things not seen for it for by it the elders obtained a good testimony so let's pray this morning father thank you for your word father we thank you lord that you're here this morning lord and as we begin to talk about this subject of faith lord knowing that you are

in control of all things, Lord.

Father, you know our hearts, you know our thoughts, and you understand why we believe what we believe.

But this morning, as we look at this topic of faith, I pray that you would open our hearts and our minds.

to understanding what your word would tell us.

Father, help me to speak your words to be clear, to not give you my opinion, to not give my opinion, but to speak what you would have me say this morning.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Amen.

Faith.

You know, we talk about faith a lot, especially in the church, and it's such a simple concept, right?

Faith, you believe.

But yet, as you begin to...

look at it, it has unsearchable depth.

It just continues and it goes on.

And as we launch into these series, I know I'm not going to be here for the next couple weeks, but as we launch into these series talking about by faith, I hope to help us define faith and to understand how we are to live by faith.

Because we're reticent to say, yeah, I live by faith, but

Oftentimes, if we were to ask, well, how do you live by faith?

We might say, well, I go to church and I read my Bible sometimes and I pray on occasion.

And it's hard for us to define what it means to live by faith.

At least I find for some of us it is.

But one thing I want to start off with saying faith is not superstition.

It's not a feeling or an emotion that changes anything.

A superstition is something that is defined as beliefs that are not based on science or reason, but personal beliefs based on karma, luck, or some other omen of fate.

And it's interesting how many people will use faith in Jesus as a talisman or a charm of some kind against evil.

And they add it to the many other charms, superstitions, patterns, practices that they use to be as good as they can, to understand what's out there and how am I to react to it and how am I to respond so that I can be the best version of me that I can.

And Jesus is just one of the boxes they check with all the other things that they do.

And, you know, they just want to cover all their bases.

They want to make sure, you know, and do everything.

And I believe part of the reason is that many people misinterpret this passage in Hebrews 11, verse 1.

Because I would ask you a question, and you can answer out loud if you want, but I do want you to understand this might be a trick question, so...

Careful what you shout.

What is the definition of faith?

I believe most people would give Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1.

If you would ask most people, how would you define faith?

Just about every one of us would say, well, faith is the substance of things hoped for.

It's the evidence of things not seen.

Right?

Yeah.

See, I believe most people in America would say that they're Christian.

Actually, about 60 percent of I believe do.

And they are hoping because it says it's a substance of things hoped for.

And I believe this is where most of us get caught up.

It's a trick word for us in English because hope in English is, oh, I hope I get that nice car.

There's a good chance you won't.

But there's a small chance you might.

That's how we view hope.

And so a lot of times when we define faith, we see that as like faith is something I'm hoping for.

Man, I just, I really hope, I hope, I hope I'm good enough to get into heaven.

I hope I am.

There's not very much assurance with that.

There's not much confidence in that.

And they're hoping for an easy existence in the next life.

That's the evidence they want to see.

And most people in America would say that Jesus is the Son of God, and they know how to say other Christianese phrases and speak different jargons that would make you think, if you heard it, oh, they know something about the Bible.

They must be a Christian.

But I do think that there's some fault in that.

And the Bible talks a lot about lip service or faith of the lips where we're willing to say things.

But yet, if you were to examine their life, their actions, their reactions, their choices, their fruit, things like that, it becomes quite evident that their faith is not real.

It's just a proclamation that's not true.

So the question now is, what is verse 1 talking about?

And I wanted to, I started off saying, remember, it's a continuation of chapter 10.

And so he says, faith is the substance of things hoped for.

What is the substance they're hoping for?

Well, we find that answer in chapter 10, verse 36.

It says in chapter 10, verse 36,

For you have need of endurance so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

That's the substance.

The substance is the promise that will be received when we enter into eternal life and we have eternity with Jesus.

But it goes on and says, yet for a little while and he who is coming will come and will not tarry.

That's the evidence that's not seen from 11 verse 1.

Sorry, we don't have it up there.

We're still working on our PowerPoints a little bit.

We got an update this week and we thought we had it all done.

So when we look at verse 11, there's a substance that's hoped for, which is our eternal reward when we get to heaven.

There's the evidence that's not seen in that Jesus is coming back, even though he's tarrying a little bit.

And he still hasn't come back, but he is going to come back.

And there's evidence of that.

So here's the promise.

Spoken of in verse 36.

Goes back a little bit further in chapter 10 to verse 14 and verse 16.

It says for my one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days.

I will put my laws in their hearts and in their minds and I will write them.

I will write them on their hearts and their minds.

Sorry about that.

So that's the promise that we're going to receive.

And of course, the evidence is that Jesus is coming back.

So if we were to look at Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1, it's not necessarily the definition of faith.

Rather, it is a description and a partial definition of faith.

There's more to faith than just believing.

And it's based upon the context that it's being used.

See, biblical faith is neither naive optimism.

It's just like, I don't know why I believe this, but I'm hoping for the best.

I got no reason to.

Or simply wishing that things will turn out well.

I mean, you know, it's all going to work out in the end, right?

Hopefully.

Hopefully.

It's not just simply agreeing with a set of doctrines intellectually.

You can mentally say, you know, I understand that Jesus is the son of God.

And and if I believe him, I'm going to get to heaven.

There's there's an intellectual part of that that we may not activate our heart and our mind with an understanding like, hey, this is a faith.

This is something I believe.

It's just a truth.

Faith is not just agreeing to some doctrines mentally.

And it's definitely not believing something contrary to evidence because that would be superstition.

Superstition we talked about a little bit, but it's like breaking a mirror.

What happens when you break a mirror?

Nothing.

What happens when you walk under a ladder?

Nothing.

What happens when a black cat crosses your path?

Nothing.

What happens when someone says God is good and will save everyone?

Nothing.

Nothing.

It's not true.

There's no evidence to support the statement that's being offered.

We just mentally want it to be true and we identify with it and we live our life based upon the superstition.

But that's not faith.

So now, again, might be a trick question.

Is faith just belief?

Is it just believing something?

It's more than that, right?

And I hope that you understand my purpose today is just to make us think, to chew on what the word says to us.

So as I jump into this, I want to start with Thomas, one of the disciples that we have a lot in common with, just like Peter.

See, Thomas voiced something that many of us deal with internally.

We may not say it like Thomas did, but what Thomas said,

How Thomas functioned and how he operated was, I'm not believing until I have some proof.

Seeing is believing.

I want to touch his scars.

I want to put my hand in his side.

And that's how it's going to be.

And we've all had these moments.

We've all had these times of prayer, these times of crisis where it's like, I just want to know if it's real.

I'm tired of just hoping, vainly thinking, working in my imagination.

I need some proof.

And we've all been there.

Because there are some times when we just struggle with just taking someone's word for it.

It's like, I need to know.

I need to have this proof in my life.

And one of my favorite passages of all times is found in Mark chapter 9.

And this gentleman is bringing his child up to get healed.

And Jesus says, he can be healed if you believe.

And this gentleman responds, I believe, but help my unbelief.

Because sometimes that unbelief can become daunting.

We just can't overcome the the the sheer size of what's in front of us.

And unbelief has this way of just hammering us.

The enemy will just attack and be like, you got no hope.

Everything you believe is just words.

Can you show me one place where this is true and you can touch, see, smell, taste or feel it?

It gets difficult.

See, but unlike Thomas, we have a problem because we can't touch the nail holes.

We can't put our hands in his side.

So how do we deal with this problem?

Well, John is going to give us the answer in John chapter 20.

John, writing his book, said, but these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you may have life in his name.

There's a secret that helps us find proof.

The secret is the written word of God.

The secret of faith is the written word of God.

See, true biblical faith is confident obedience to God despite consequences or circumstances.

Let me tell you that again.

True biblical faith is

is confident obedience to God's word, regardless of circumstances or consequences.

If your faith is going to be real, it's going to be obedient to God's word, even if it hurts you.

See, because we can do all things when it's for our blessing.

I mean, it's easy to obey the word when we're going to make \$100,000, right?

Yeah, I'll call the bank out on that mistake.

That's right.

But if it's going to cost me \$10, you're like, well, I mean, you know, it's their fault.

They should have caught it.

It's not my problem.

It's real easy to be obedient when it benefits.

It's very difficult to be obedient when it costs us.

See, the word of God is the foundation upon which our faith is built.

It's strengthened here.

It comes from here.

We can't touch Jesus, but we can touch our Bible.

This is the word of God.

You can open it up and you can read it and you can ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

And he will open up the scripture to you.

It will cause your faith to grow.

It will cause your faith to be strengthened.

You'll find some proof that you need.

I want to make two quick points this morning.

Two point sermon.

Who's ever had a two point sermon?

First, Paul lays out this truth for us in the book of Romans, how this is our foundation.

Romans 10, verse 17 says, So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

So I cannot stress this enough.

Your Bible, whether it's on your phone, whether it's a paper version, is your lifeline of faith.

Hearing comes first.

Faith comes by hearing the word of God.

How do you find faith?

How do you grow in your faith?

You read, you hear, you listen to the word of God.

Now, I can already hear the grumblings.

Maybe not, but I know that this is a common thread amongst many Christians.

Dare I say there was some of this spoken this weekend, but that's okay.

Okay.

And some people will say, no, no, no.

It's just the Holy Spirit living inside me.

That's all I need.

I just need the Holy Spirit and it's going to speak to me.

And that's OK.

Everything else.

I just got the Holy Spirit.

That's all I need.

If you ever hear the spirit saying something that doesn't line up with the word of God.

I don't know what spirit you're listening to.

It ain't the Holy Spirit.

Because, see, the Holy Spirit will never say something contrary to the word of God.

The Holy Spirit will only uphold and back the word of God because the Holy Spirit is not a rogue agent.

It doesn't do whatever it wants to do whenever it wants to do it.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit is going to come and he's going to tell you everything I have said.

And guess what?

Jesus said in the Gospels, I only speak what the Father tells me to speak.

So guess what the Holy Spirit's saying?

What God is saying.

Because he's getting it from Jesus.

Jesus is getting it from God.

And we're getting it straight from the source.

See, sometimes we'll hear things that sound good.

Like cleanliness is next to godliness.

I don't know if you've ever said that to your kids.

You bunch of heathens, you ungodly people, clean your room.

That's not in the Bible, guys.

I remember the first time I heard that, I was like, what?

I was told that my whole childhood.

And I always had a messy room, and I was like, crap, man, I'm not going to make it.

See, people will often say things that are cute and rhymey, but have no scriptural context.

It sounds good, but it's not worth the plug nickel.

So if you're like me, I love asking questions.

Your next question might be, well, how will I know what spirit is speaking to me?

We hear the scripture or we hear it said all the time, test the spirits, find out who's speaking to you.

See, you have to be a student of the Word of God.

You better get that.

God's calling.

No, I'm just joking.

We have to be a student of the Word of God.

Paul told Timothy, study to show yourself approved, rightly dividing the Word of God.

You know, you can use Scripture to make a point about anything you want.

You can wrongly divide the Word of God, and you can preach a whole sermon that might sound good,

But it's not good.

You guys can leave that up there.

It's going to be fun.

I created my first picture using chat GTP.

I got in there and I said, hey, I want you to create this image that's in my mind.

And I explained what it was.

And that's what I came up with.

I mean, it's not exactly what was in my mind, but it's close.

It's a good concept of what was in my mind.

See, your faith must have a foundation in the word of God or it will die.

Faith comes by hearing, memorizing, studying, knowing your Bible.

See, your faith grows.

Your faith provides you a defense when it gets challenged.

It equips you for the work of the ministry.

It comforts and it strengthens and it brings peace and it teaches us grace.

And how to mature into men and women of God.

And like I said, I always think in pictures.

So as I was writing this yesterday, because I had such a busy weekend, this picture just came to my mind as I was doing this.

And so this is what I did.

See, your Bible is where you will gain everything you need for your faith to become as strong as it can.

If you're rooting your faith in anything except the Word of God, it's a lie.

It's not going to stand.

It's not going to be true.

It's a trick of the enemy.

So faith comes by hearing and reading and studying the Word of God.

It is the foundational building block of your faith.

So the second point I want to share this morning.

If you are not intentionally feeding your faith with the word of God, guess what?

It will be choked out by the cares of this world.

I learned something very fascinating as I was studying yesterday.

I'm going to bring you to the parable of the sower found in Matthew chapter 13.

And this is the guy who sowed the seed, which is the word of God, onto different grounds.

And then he gives us an explanation in verse 22 about the seed that was found on the thorny ground.

And it says, now he who received the seed amongst the thorns is he who hears the word.

Wow, I never saw this before yesterday.

So they received the word of God.

it landed, faith began to grow, and there's this beautiful salvation that's going on.

But guess what?

They're not really reading their Bible very well.

Because the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of the riches, what does it do?

Does it choke faith?

Nah.

It chokes the Word.

Faith comes by

Can you talk when you're being choked?

It's very difficult, isn't it?

Remember when you were a kid and you got put in a chokehold?

Very difficult to talk while you're being choked.

See, the cares of this world, they don't challenge your faith.

They don't come to steal your faith.

They don't need to.

But if they can just silence the word of God,

if they could just choke out the need to read and study and learn God's scripture, guess what?

If you're not hearing the word of God, you're not growing in faith.

Actually, the opposite is true.

Your faith is dying.

Hmm.

That was very eye-opening for me.

So if you are consistently not in your Bible, your faith is struggling and it's malnourished.

See, faith comes by hearing.

Faith is strengthened by the word of God.

Jesus said, you shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the word of God.

That's probably misquoted, but that's what it means.

So as we begin this study in faith, as we begin to walk out and find out what it means to live by faith, here is the foundational piece that you have to have if you're going to understand how to live by faith.

It's the word of God.

See, reason, I'm sorry, faith is not just belief.

Faith is belief.

With obedience.

See, we believe in Jesus.

We get saved.

We go to his word.

And we do.

We're obedient to what it says.

See, James talks about this several times in his book in the first two chapters.

And he gives us these lines.

Do not be hearers of the word only, but doers of the word.

So this implies that hearing and obeying the word of God is how we strengthen our faith as well.

So James chapter two, verse 14, that first verse says what?

Oh, I'm sorry.

I want to tell you what I did here real quick.

A lot of people get hung up on the word works.

They think they have to go out and work.

So when you work, you get a paycheck.

You've earned something.

Well, this isn't the work that is being said there.

So I switched out the word works with this word obedience.

It's going to make a lot more sense.

So verse 14 says, what?

And it's okay if you do that with the Greek, guys.

I didn't just do this of my own.

The Greek word is a very fascinating word there.

But it says, what does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have obedience?

Can faith save him?

In this instance, faith is being used there as belief only.

He goes on to talk about also faith by itself.

If it does not have obedience.

It's dead.

This is James talking, by the way, this is not me.

Verse 18 goes on to say, but someone will say you have faith and I have works.

I left works there for a reason.

You have faith and I have works.

Show me your faith without your obedience, which is impossible.

And I will show you my faith by my obedience.

Which one would be more real to you?

Which one sounds like lip service only?

Yeah, I believe.

I mean, I don't do anything that stupid book says, but I believe.

Really?

You believe it.

But you're not listening to it.

Hmm.

if we're not in the word of God, if we're allowing life to choke out the word of God, if we're so busy, we just can't spend five minutes a day just asking God, reading his word.

It's your faith that begins to struggle.

Your faith becomes malnourished.

It becomes weak.

And then it begins to fail us.

And then we're like, well, God's not real because I believe that nothing's happening the way it should.

Well, try being obedient to his word.

So I'm going to close this morning.

And I wanted to give this message in particular because we're starting on this amazing journey of what it means

means how we how we work out this proverb of living by faith how we make that a reality in our life and not just something that we say because it's a scripture and it's it's good i just i don't know how to do it

But I hope over the next couple of weeks, before we really get into this, that you're reading chapters 11 and 12.

Read them several times.

They're going to be the basis by which we pull this series from out of Hebrews.

And I know we got Thanksgiving and Christmas.

That's going to make this really interesting and fun.

But we're going to get it through.

We're going to get through it.

Amen.

Amen.

So this morning we covered two things.

I just want to remind you this as we we close out.

Faith is rooted in the word of God.

And it comes by hearing the word of God.

That's the first thing we learn.

If you want your faith to grow.

See, many times in the New Testament, Jesus said, oh, you of little faith.

Or he talked about your faith being weak.

Or he talked about having a measure of faith.

But those are all things that are starting points.

The disciples had weak faith when they were in the boat.

Because they didn't step out like Peter, even though he had weak faith and began to sink.

But guess what?

After Jesus left, their faith wasn't so weak.

You can have weak faith and you can change that to become strong faith.

It just depends upon your scriptural diet.

It depends upon your scriptural diet.

Are you trying to grow your faith?

The next thing we learn, that the cares of this life will always seek to choke out, not your faith, to choke out the word of God.

To say, you know, that's not really true.

It's just an old book.

It was written by a bunch of people who didn't know what they were talking about.

The enemy will do whatever he can to make you disregard and not believe this book.

When that happens...

Faith has a real hard time getting any traction.

So this morning, remember this.

Faith comes by hearing the word of God.

And the cares of this world will seek to choke the word of God out of your life.

You must fight to prioritize time in the word of God.

It does not come easy.

Sometimes reading this book is not easy.

But it's like all things.

The more you do it, the more you pray, the more you ask, the more you come to church and hear sermons.

Not that I'm all that great, but it helps open up the word of God to us so that we can begin to understand it.

Amen.

Amen.

Let's stand this morning.

Well, Father, we thank you for your word.

Lord, I know that this was just an opening for where we're going.

But Father, I felt that it was important for us to understand, to give a foundation on how we live by faith, how we strengthen our faith, how we even find faith.

And Lord, as we stand here this morning, I know all of us are in varying journeys of faith.

Some are excelling and far ahead, but others of us, Lord, are lagging behind or our faith is very weak.

It might not even be existent, Lord, but yet we're here this morning and we're hearing the word of God.

So, Holy Spirit, I ask that you would continue to speak to those

Who need to hear.

Which father is all of us.

No matter where we are in our journey.

Because we're not complete.

We're not finished.

There's still more to know.

There's still more to grow into understanding.

And living like you.

So father I pray that you would just.

Help us to find time.

To prioritize the word of God.

That we would ground our faith.

Into the scriptures.

And that we would seek to understand.

What you were telling us.

Through the word of God.

I thank you for this time this morning with my friends.

I ask that you would be with those here.

Lord, you would be with them this week.

Give them opportunity to share their faith.

In Jesus name.

Amen.

Amen.

Well, Lord bless you.

I am not going to be here very long.