

# It Comes Down To Faith (Part 1 of 4)

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**Bible Text:** Hebrews 11

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...orchestrated, planned out to perfection and we put so much emphasis on timing and the structure of music and worship to have a song mentioned that hardly anyone knew, that the Lord would direct someone to speak a song that no one could sing and yet used it so powerfully in my life I couldn't even pay attention to the rest of the worship service because of the words that are written in this song by A.D. Simpson. It is absolutely amazing.

And you could say, "This is a man who knows the Lord." But it would be better to say, "Here is a man who did not know the Lord well and journeyed to become a man who understood great things about the Lord," because you can see both the error of immaturity and you see the strength of maturity in these words as this...once it was the blessing. I remember that. I remember that, the desire for the blessing. But now it is the Lord. Once it was the feeling, now it is God has spoken. I need nothing but his Word, his Word is backed up by his character. Once his gift I wanted, now the giver. Once I sought for healing, now I seek for him.

And there is so much in here that has to do with what I am going to be teaching on this weekend that I just want to just continue for a moment. Once 'twas painful trying to work out our sanctification in a sense of us doing so much to bring it about or us putting ourselves in a certain spiritual position, our rising up to a certain spiritual level that would enable, then, God to work through us. Once 'twas painful trying, now 'tis perfect trust, not in ourselves, but in him. Once I have salvation I see so many people who I believe are truly converted and yet if you were...yet this passage here describes their life. It is a half salvation, something that they and God seem to be working out together.

Now there is a true sense in which we are to work out our salvation and we are going to see, hopefully this weekend, how in the end we recognize 'tis all from God.

And then he says, "Once 'twas ceaseless holding, now he holds me fast. Once 'twas constant drifting, now my anchor is cast. Once 'twas busy planning, now 'tis trustful prayer. Once 'twas anxious caring, now he has the care. Once it was what I wanted, now what Jesus says. Once I was constantly asking for things, now it is ceaseless praise. Once it was my working, his it hence shall be. Once I tried to use him, now he uses me."

That's an amazing, an amazing statement.

“Once the power I wanted, now the mighty one. Once for self I labored, now for him alone. Once I hoped in Jesus, now I know he is mine, once my lamps were dying, now they brightly shine. Once for death I waited, now his coming hail. And my hopes are anchored safe within the veil.”

This is such an amazing declaration of a growth into maturity and a maturity that begins to understand what faith truly is.

This evening and unless the Lord changes something, I am going to be speaking about faith. I am going to be speaking about faith. I...rarely do I teach on this because I know so little about it. There are so many seminary things that you can say, so many doctrinal things and good things that you can say about faith. But it is only over the years and years and years of watching his faithful working in your life that you can begin to understand faith. It is much more than just some evangelistic command. It is something that is to be a great part of our lives all the days of our lives until we step into his presence and there will be no more need of faith because we will see. We will see.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer and then we will turn to Hebrews chapter 11.

*Father, I come before you in the name of your Son and I pray for your help in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Hebrews chapter 11 verse one. And before I read this passage I want to say something. In some circles not enough is being said about faith and in other circles too much is being said because what is being said is not biblical. It is not sound. When I speak about faith, when I speak about faith the impetus is not on your faith, but the greater emphasis is placed upon the faithfulness of God. It is not your ability to rise to some spiritual level, but the character of almighty God that we are dealing with when we talk about faith. All of it has to do with his character, his character. And your activity or your response is going to depend upon what you know about the character of God and what you know about your own inability.

Now it says here to start off, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”<sup>1</sup> Now I want us to ask ourselves a question here. It is the assurance of things hoped for. How can you have assurance of something that you are just hoping for? I mean there are many people hoping many things in the world and most of it is foolishness. I can...I can climb up to the pinnacle of the highest building in the world and I can jump off with the greatest of hope that I am going to be all right when I hit the bottom. And it says here in the Bible, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for.”<sup>2</sup> Ok, I hope for eternal life. I hope for the ceasing of sin. I hope for a new creation. I hope for a new heaven and a new earth. I hope to be conformed to the image of Christ. I hope to escape condemnation. But where on earth or where in heaven can I get the assurance that what I am hoping for is a reality and not just some deluded dream of

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 11:1

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

someone who is hoping for something more than what it says?

It says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”<sup>3</sup> I have never seen heaven. I have never seen God. I have never seen a perfected saint. I have never seen a place on this earth where I am safe from harm. I have never felt things that I hope to feel some day and it says here, what does it say? “...the conviction of things not seen.”<sup>4</sup> How can I have the conviction of something not only I have never seen, but no one has ever seen?

As we come down to a very, very important statement that has to be made and it is this. I can have assurance that what I hope for is real. And I can have the greatest conviction of things I have not seen only because God has spoken. God has spoken.

I am so tired of this...of this...our evangelical situation in America today.

“Well, what is faith?”

“Well, faith...you have just got to believe. You have just got to take that leap of faith. You have just got to leap out there into the dark,” and all these other foolish ideas of what faith truly is.

Faith is not faith unless God has spoken. God has spoken.

I can have assurance and I can have conviction only because God has broken into this world and God has revealed himself and God has spoken through the Word of God. And so many people today believe in so many things that simply are not true. So many people in the name of Christ are believing so many things and are so disappointed because they have been led astray.

I always tell people this. Unbelief is when God has spoken and you do not heed. Presumption is when you stand upon something that God never promised. You and I, we are going to see in this text that faith is of utmost importance, that through faith we please God, that without faith it is impossible to please God. But we must understand something. Faith is only faith when it is built upon the revelation of God, God revealing himself to his people and God speaking to his people.

Now when I said those two things I meant to say two different things. It is not only that God has spoken. God has spoken. He has said a word. He has told us who he is. He has given us many great promises. He has spoken. But not only has he spoken, he has revealed to the true believer who he is.

And you say, “Why is that important?”

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Because in order to believe the thing spoken you must understand or know the character of the one who has promised it.

Faith is all about knowing what God has said and knowing who God is. I can know what a person has said without believing what they said if I do not trust their character. To the same degree it is not just that God has spoken to you, believer. But he has given you reason to believe what he has spoken. He has revealed his character to you, a flawless, perfect, holy character. And you could march every saint that has ever walked on this earth from the first until now and ask them to give testimony and not one of them would rightfully be able to put an accusation at the feet of God and make it stick.

What we are dealing with here and what I want to communicate this weekend and I am so afraid because it is such a big thing. I know I won't be able to communicate it properly. It is this. We have a God who must be heard. He has spoken. We must listen. We must obey. But we also have a God who has shown us who he is and gives us all the reason in heaven and on earth to believe him, to go with him, to walk with him, to step out with him, to throw our lives upon him, to risk. And it is not about reaching some tremendous spiritual level. It is about comprehending something of the greatness of God and understanding his simple promises.

And so we start off: Now faith is the assurance, what we hope for. Now what do you hope for? That's my question.

You see, in order to have assurance, something you are hoping for, it has to be based upon the promise of God. Are you hoping for God's promises?

I know so many people and I have seen it even in my own life. I am hoping for some sort of fulfillment> I am hoping for some sort of pleasure. I am hoping for some sort of peace, but I am possibly hoping in all the wrong things.

Christians don't just live some of them, you know, mesmerized by the world .We don't just get distracted by the world because we are sinful creatures. We get distracted by the world because sometimes we look and it glitters and we think in that thing we will find hope and we will find peace and we will find fulfillment. And it really comes down to whom are you going to believe?

We all want to hope. We all want peace. We all want certain things. We all want our lives to matter. We all want to prosper. We all have a hope that life will be better, that somehow there will be progress. The question is: What are you hoping? Some of you hoping that possibly more insurance or...or more education and a better job or more things or better circumstances, that if only this, this and this and this happened then I would be content. Then everything will be all right.

But it won't be all right because God wants all your contentment. He wants all your peace to come from him, his character and his spoken Word. He wants you to be looking towards him and only him. That's why the words of this song is so special.

What have you...in what have you placed your hope, your hope for all the things that you desire? In what have you placed your hope?

Some of you young people here tonight, you are hoping about so many things and you have got so many plans and so many ideas that if this, this, this and that and that and that happen in your life it is going to go well with you when all of that is nothing more than clutter and it should be moved to one side and thrust away into the garbage can and you should have Jesus Christ and the will of God standing before you hoping only in him and his work in your life.

And he says that:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. For by it men of old gained approval.<sup>5</sup>

Here is something. It is a remarkable statement. Why? Men have a tendency, lost men most assuredly, but even the true believer has this continuing tendency in their life to find approval from God based on what they did, on their performance and especially in our culture. In our culture today we are approved of God even Christendom, if we have done all right, if we have dotted every I and crossed every T it still has something to do with our performance. We are still full of self. We are still hoping some way to win something from God and make God our debtor.

But nowhere in the Bible does it ever say that a person is approved of God by their deeds, by the works of the flesh, by the law. But the Bible does say, "Listen, men of old gained approval." God placed his stamp of approval on men of old. How? By faith. Not by them doing and not by them necessarily being, but by them believing God they were stamped "approved."

Now why is faith so important? Why is it so important? It is important for this reason. It is all...or should I say it this way? It has everything to do with the character of God. Your faith or lack thereof is a declaration of what you think about the character of God. When you are mesmerized by the world, when you get distracted and look for life and peace and everything else everywhere but other than...but rather in the Lord, do you know what you are actually saying? You are saying one of two things. One, "God is not good. God has declared to me the way of life, but he is not good and I am not going to trust him, but I am going to go find the way of life out there on my own." Or you are saying, possibly, "God is good, but he is not wise, that God has declared to me the way of life and he is really well meaning, kind of like an old grandfather that is not very contemporary and doesn't really know what is going on. He has declared to me the way of life and I know he is really nice, kind of like a grandpa, but he doesn't understand and I'm going to go find the way of life some other way."

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<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 11:1-2

You see, whenever you and I try to etch out or eek out a living of our own following our own will, whenever we are not trusting God we are saying something about what we believe about the character of God. Either he is not good, he does not want the best for us or he is good, but he does not know the best for us.

What you and I have to come to grips with is this. Do we truly believe that God is good? And then, do we truly believe he knows what he is talking about? Because every time you and I take a step off the path and start looking at anything in the world to find some kind of pleasure, some kind of joy, some kind of fulfillment, what we are saying is that we don't believe that God is who he says he is.

I have a little plaque in my office and I don't hang it on the wall. I keep it right there on my desk. It says, "God gives the best to those who leave the choices up to him." Do you believe that? Do you believe that?

You say, "Brother Paul, I expected to come here tonight and hear just the..." Well, this is what you are going to hear, very simple, very simple.

Do you believe that God is all good? And do you believe that he is all wise? If so, then walk by faith. If so, then do what he has commanded you. Walk with this Bible as a map before you. By faith what? By faith God tells me to separate myself from this aspect of this world in which I live in. I will do it. Why? Because I know God is good and I know God is wise. I know he desires the best for me and I know he knows. And so I will follow. Obedience.

We seem to separate obedience and faith so many times. Well, trust and obey. The only way you can obey is if you trust. The only way you can obey is if you trust the Lord. I trust him enough to obey what he says even though my flesh is tantalized by what the world is using to lure me. I will still follow him even though if it causes me to suffer poverty, to suffer persecution, to suffer whatever I have to suffer. I will believe that he is who he says he is and that his Word is true.

Men were approved by God because when God spoke and they said, "Yes, Lord," they were saying more than just, "I will obey." They were saying, "You are the God that you say you are. You are. There is no shadow in you. There is no fault of wisdom in you. There is nothing wrong in you. You are perfect in all your ways. You have spoken. I will believe it because I believe your character. I know who you are. You are every bit the God that you say you are."

Can't you see, my dear friends, especially those of you so young, so wise in your own eyes? You spend so much of your life saying either that God is not good or that you are smarter than he. Every time you follow the world, every time you are lured in the wrong direction by all the glitter that is not gold of this present age, every time you are making a declaration against the character of God.

You see it is always this. God has spoken. Is it true? Every time you step a foot into that world you are saying, “No, it is not. I know better. I know better.”

Dear young people, listen to me. In your conscience—or what is left of it—that might work real well when you use that type of argument against your parents. You very well may know better than your parents. But you can never raise that accusation against God. God knows and you ought to obey. God has spoken and you ought to heed. You ought to believe who he is and follow him.

For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.<sup>6</sup>

Listen to me. I sit there...the silliest activity you can ever be involved in—at least in the academic setting—is to argue with someone over miracles. I mean, I just hear it all the time. You are at a university or something. Someone says, “Well, you know, I just...I like this Jesus character and all this sort of stuff, but I just have a problem with the miraculous. I just can’t seem to accept the miraculous.”

And even today in our world as Christians the miraculous seems so miraculous to us, so foreign, so something that is really not going to happen. And, see, what you have got to understand is this. You only have to answer one question. Is there a God? If there is a God miracles are not a problem because by the very truth that there is a God, if he is God he can do absolutely anything, anything.

Many of you know I...I work in a mission called Heart Cry. And it is... all of its financial principles are based upon the Scriptures, but greatly influenced by George Mueller’s work in the orphanages in England. We never raise funds. We never make our needs known. We never tell a man anything.

If a man walked up to us and said, “You know, just...I’ll give you up to a million dollars, just tell me what you need.”

We would say—even if we were flat broke—we would say, “Sir, we have everything we need. If you would go home and pray, that’s all.”

But I find myself there huddled together with the other staff, sometimes just...how many times have we seen God move at the final hour? I mean the very final hour, the final moment rescue us so many times. How many times in Scripture have I seen over and over how God has performed miracle after miracle to deliver to save to help his people? And I sit there in that little office with the other men and we are grumbling and we’re fearful and we are afraid about what is going to happen and then all of a sudden this verse will pop into my mind. “I created the universe, Paul Washer. I hold it all in place. Quit whining. Stand up. Leave this to me.”

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<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 11:2-3

You see, here is what it comes down to. You say, “Well, I don’t know if I can trust God with regard to this. I don’t know if I can trust him with regard to my family. I don’t know if I can trust him with regard to being a missionary or trust him with my finances or...”

He made the world and he sustains the world and that is very important. It is very important that I say he made the world and he sustains the world and not just that he made the world. Because if I said he made the world you could say, “Yeah, yeah, I know. You know, God did that kind of stuff in the past. God worked that way in the Old Testament. God did miracles in the Old Testament. God did so much...” And you could believe God back then. I mean he spoke to people from burning bushes.

But when I say, “He not only created, but he sustains,” it is a continuing work.

One of the things that is so hard to get over to Christians today is that the new covenant is better than the old one. It is so hard for people to understand that. I hear so many people, “Oh, I just wish I lived back in this times, you know, in the Old Testament where God did...” What are we saying? What are we saying? That’s absolutely preposterous, absolutely preposterous. We are those who are living at the end of the age. We are the ones who have been born again. The least in this kingdom of ours is greater than any Old Testament prophet that ever walked on the face of the earth. God desires to do great things among us. He desires to move. He desires to save. He desires to show himself strong.

We get into these things where we say, “Well, I just don’t know if, you know, God...”

God made the world. Look at what he is saying. And he said, “Look.” You weren’t here when he did it. Some of you look like you are old enough to have been here when he did it. But you weren’t here when he did it.

By faith you believe that he did.

You say, “No, brother Paul, I have gone through all the academic arguments and my belief that the world was created by God is based upon everything we know about geology.”

Then you ought to be afraid because even though a lot of truths in geology and biology and everything else back up and prove my faith or show my faith to be credible scientifically, my belief that God created this world is not based on some geological scale. And it is not based on my knowledge of biology. I know God created the world because God said it here, because he has spoken.

Here is something I want to share with you. It is kind of a side thought, but I want you to think about something, especially some of you guys who are in college and things like that. I want you to think about something. There are all these books out there today and some of them have some good things to offer, but they are books on, you know, proving how your Christianity is valid or how it’s, you know, the Bible is the Word of God, how



we know the Bible is the Word of God. And they will give you 10 or 20 historical proofs that be able to demonstrate to your professor why you are not as dumb he thinks you are and all these sorts of things. Why, you know, 30 evidences to why we believe Jesus was raised from the dead, 40 legal or historical proofs that demonstrate that the Christian faith is accurate.

Well, all of those things are well and good, but where does the Aguaruna go?

You say, "What?"

The Aguaruna tribe of Condorcanqui in Peru. What are they supposed to do? If we know the world was created by God because of science and if we know that Jesus was raised from the dead because of 20 historical legal reasons, then how on earth is the Aguaruna going to believe who doesn't even know where Jerusalem is at?

I know Aguarunas. I know tribal people who couldn't even find the Middle East on a map, yet they have risked their lives for the faith. They have died for the faith. They have served faithfully the Lord Jesus Christ unto death and you could torture them with every amount of torture and they would not deny what they believe.

You see, their faith is not based upon a bunch of academic exercises. Their faith is based on this. One day the Holy Spirit came and renewed their heart. They were born again and God spoke to them.

You say, "Well, how did they know it was God?"

When it is God, you know it is God.

I want you to understand something. I am here today and I believe God not because I have worked out some intellectual exercise. I believe God because God has come to me and revealed his Son to me. And if you are truly believing God today, you are believing God because of a supernatural work of grace in your life, a supernatural work of grace from a miraculous God that comes and intervenes, that comes and intercepts. That enters into our lives.

Something about that and it has to do with faith and it is very, very important. When God comes into a person's life the only word I can use to describe that is "extremely dangerous." God is extremely dangerous. He is not safe. He is not tame.

I look around me today and I look at a Christianity that is so safe. Even church structures and things and ways of discerning God's will seem to be nothing more than fences to keep God out.

My life was safe and then God saved me. Paul the apostle, his life was safe, his life was structured. His life was orderly. His life was religious. His life was going somewhere. He had a Daytimer. And then Jesus Christ showed up and everything was blown to pieces,

living every day a risk, every day not knowing where he is going, every day just waiting to hear the next command.

You say, “Oh, the apostle Paul...”

No, that is Christian life. That is the Christian life. It is to be constantly believing God, constantly pushing the envelope, constantly risking, constantly going forward, constantly.

Now he says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that that which is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”<sup>7</sup>

Now, it is very important this thing he is using here with visible and seen, very, very important. It goes back to verse one. It keeps going on throughout the chapter. Not seeing, not seeing. You are believing something you have not seen. You are believing something you have not seen. And that’s where these people get these crazy ideas that faith is nothing more than a leap in the dark.

“Faith is a leap in the dark. It is believing something you have not seen.”

But it is not a leap in the dark if you believe something you have not seen, because God told you it was there. God told you it was there.

People sometimes talk about...use a bridge as an example of the Christian life or a path. Well, let’s pretend that this is a cliff. The other side is way over there and this is a bottomless pit right here. Faith to me, from what I can see in Scripture in the lives of the patriarchs and the lives of Abraham and up to the present day, saints that walk by faith. Faith is not a way that is cut out across this gigantic hole or abyss that you can see, you can follow it with your eyes and it goes clearly to the other side and you say, “Ok, I see it. I see the way it is going.” And so you take off and you just follow it.

No. God says, “Step,” and there is nothing there. “Step.” There is something there.

And you are sitting there going, “Whoa. That was good. There wasn’t any thing there. He said, ‘Step.’ I stepped. Now I have done it. Great. God, I’m glad I got that over.”

And he goes, “Step.”

And do you know what is pathetic if you are me? You are afraid to step again even though he just told you to step and you did and it was all right. That’s what is so terrible.

We sit there in the Heart Cry office sometimes and I sit there and I listen to us pray and then I will get up and I will look at the guys and they know exactly what I am going to say. I say, “How many times do we have to go through this? How many times are we going to not believe our God?”

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<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 11:3

So faith is you stepped, “Ok, it is solid.” Now step again and step again and step again. And many times as you go on out through life, that road across that abyss is not going to get brighter, it is going to get darker because he wants you to trust him more.

“Lord, I stepped, then, but the valley wasn’t as deep then as it is now. Now it is deeper...”

That’s what faith is. It is trusting what he has said even though you have not seen him.

Maybe there is no ear that has heard it and no eye that has ever seen it, but he tells you it is there. And so you step.

Now so that this doesn’t get just mystical, I want you to understand, this is key to obedience in the Christian life. It is key to obedience.

Let me just give you a radical exaggeration, a radical, horrible illustration to show you just how practical this really is.

A man weds with the woman that God wants him to be married to. Good, solid marriage. Goes to work one day, a new secretary, absolutely the brightest, most beautiful woman on the face of the earth. Sweet as she can be and just so happens everything this man likes to do she likes to do.

You say, “Yes, it comes down to obedience.”

No. It comes down to faith. It comes down to faith.

By faith, because God has spoken, I believe that it will go better for me by faith if I turn away from this woman who is not mine. And I cleave to the woman that God has given me.

You see, it is not just blind obedience. It is a fight. God has spoken He knows everything so I can trust him and he is good. He loves me. He will direct me in the right way.

Going in debt to buy things and cars and all sorts of things, living beyond your means.

You say, “No, I will not.”

Why? Obedience? No, faith. What God has told me is right. I will believe him and not the world. I will believe him and not the world.

You see, every time you disobey God is an act of unbelief. Every time you disobey God you are attacking his character. Either he does not know what he is talking about or he does know what he is talking about, but he is evil.

You see it is by faith, by faith. By faith we don't use that lie in that business dealing. By faith. By faith we don't watch that program on television that is tantalizing so many other people. By faith we don't do that. Why? We believe God.

By faith we hold our services a different way. By faith we don't try to appear glamorous. By faith we don't try to attract people with sensual and worldly means. By faith as we believe God that he can get the job done his way and needs no improvements.

Every thing is by faith. So what I want to look at it is just not disobedience. It is lack of faith. And it is attacked against God's character.

Now, "By faith," verse four, "Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain."<sup>8</sup>

You know, I spent most of my early Christian years believing that Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain because of the blood and all this, the different types of offerings and sacrifices and his was just...no that's not what Hebrew said. Hebrews says that Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain because of faith. He believed that there was a purpose, an end, a reason for what was being done. He believed that it was right, that it was useful, that there was something there.

And I want to tell you something. This is a mark against us. Many times those of us who are Christians do you worship by faith? Do you worship by faith? Here we have Cain. He offers a sacrifice. He does an external religious thing, but he is...he sees no purpose in it. He sees nothing supernatural, nothing God centered in it. It is just something that you do. Name a religion. You do it. You get it done. You go home.

We need to apply this to our worship services. We need to think about this.

"By faith I will come together with my brethren. By faith I will sing this..."

How would you sing if you knew the song you were singing was heard by countless angels and even made its way to the very ear of God and brought him pleasure? Can you believe that by faith? If you could believe that by faith you would sing differently. If you could believe that by faith you would pray differently, wouldn't you? I know that with our mouths we say, "Yes, I believe that," but is that a reality in your life? There is so much of what we think we believe that is not a reality in our lives. It is not a reality. It is not good enough just to know it. It is not good enough just to, as they say, believe it.

The only word I can find to describe what it ought to be is reality. When you are singing is there the reality that this brings pleasure to God? When you obey God, when you turn away from the world and you obey God, is there a sense in you, a reality in you that this is God's desire and this is right and this is good and God is pleased and God is glorified?

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<sup>8</sup> Hebrews 11:4

When you go out to do a service in Christ's name wouldn't you be more excited about it if you truly believed that even giving a glass of cold water in his name you would not lose your reward?

Some of you are involved in Christian service and, boy, I know how it is, just...it is definitely Christian service whether you are a pastor or whatever you do. Whatever you do Christian service is a thing of endurance. And the doldrums of just daily activity, daily activity, daily activity, but if the Bible says that reward is given for cold water, then doing that secretarial work that I might have to do at the mission, doing that administrative stuff, man, I ought to be stamping envelopes like this and singing the Hallelujah chorus because every time my hand hits there and puts that stamp on that envelope it is done in Christ's name. By faith there is a purpose. By faith there is a reason. By faith God is glorified. By faith there is reward.

You say, "Well, brother Paul, we're too spiritual here to talk about rewards."

Well, then you are more spiritual than Jesus because he talked about them a lot.

You see, by faith our lives are filled with purpose.

"Well, I just don't know why I keep going on. No one appreciates me. No..."

By faith you keep going on. By faith you keep going on.

Missionaries, for example, one of the things that I look for in a missionary above just about everything else is failure, is failure. I have a guy come to me and I mean, you know, he is baptizing 300 people a day and has done all this stuff and I mean every time he opens up the Bible angels dance in his office. I am not going to work with the guy because I have been a missionary and I know that is not the way it works.

Missionaries will take off for the foreign field and, boy, so zealous and praise God. A young man is going to Romania next week and is from a wealthy family. Now, he...man, he is so... you touch him, your fingers will burn he is so full of zeal right now. And praise God because he needs that.

But, boy, when they don't appreciate him and they don't love him and they use him and he goes through all the stuff he has got to go through. The only thing that is going to keep him there on that mission field is faith. The only thing that is going to keep him in that marriage is faith.

Young person, when the world comes at you and is tantalizing you and telling you, "Do this. This is good. His is fun. This is wonderful. Do this. Do this. Do this." It comes down to not am I going to be just obedient to my parents and not only am I going to be obedient to God. Am I going to believe him? Because God gets very little glory out of a person who is just... "Well, you know, I am just going to have to turn my back on this and lose just all these wonderful things because, bless God, I am going to obey him."

Now that's obedience worked out—if you could say such a thing—in unbelief. You are just doing God favors and he doesn't need any done.

No, it is by faith.

“I know, sir, that what you are telling me is a lie straight out of the pit of hell. By faith I know that everything you are saying is a deception. By faith, world, the very things you offer me, I despise the things you offer me.”

“And upon what authority do you do this?”

“On the authority that my Lord has said quite another thing about all the things you are offering me. And I will choose to believe him. I will do it his way.”

That's why a lot of things for those of you thinking possibly about going into ministry or something, you ought to be very, very careful. The world is filled up today with seminars on all the different ways to build a church. And to embrace them is to say that God's way doesn't work. And God's way does. It is the only way it works.

Now he goes on and he says, “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain.”<sup>9</sup> Now here is something. Sometimes I am in a church. They might have a choir of 400 people. And they definitely sing better than you guys. But is what they are offering a better sacrifice? It might be. It might be. It might be because just because you sing bad doesn't mean you are spiritual. Think about that, too. You know, it goes both ways.

“Well, we're not full of that tradition, you know. We don't have, you know, religious things hanging on the walls.”

Well, you can be just as traditional about white walls as you can religious things.

You see, folks, it is a pit on both sides. It is a pit on both sides. But the sacrifice, the value of the sacrifice before God is not how well they sing or how bad they sing. It is how is it being offered? By faith. By faith I am giving this to God.

That's why I so love the Song of Solomon when the young lady wants to present this garden to the great king, this little puny garden that she has. She is saying, “Oh, awake north wind, west wind, east wind, south wind, blow the fragrance of this garden that he might come and receive his garden.”<sup>10</sup> She believes. And he is going to come and he is going to offer what she is offering, that it has a purpose, that he will delight in it.

So many times what we call spiritual humility is nothing but unbelief.

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<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 11:3

<sup>10</sup> See Song of Solomon 4:16

It goes on and he says, “A better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous.”<sup>11</sup>

Now this isn't often used, but I mean, in the same context with Romans chapter four, but it ought to be. In Romans chapter four, Romans chapter five, how did Abraham obtain the testimony that he was righteous? By faith. It is always by faith. By faith. And it is always believing God to do what is an absolute impossibility not only for man, but for any creature.

We are approved by faith. We are approved.

You know, I told someone. I was talking to someone one time and I just got through talking to a bunch of just wild charismatics and their whole thing came down to I finally figured it out. They thought the greatest act of faith was being able to raise the dead.

Well, I suppose that would be something. But I began to think about this was almost the testimony of a man of God that could raise the dead.

And I started thinking about what...what...what is it that requires faith? Do you know what I came down to? It was this conclusion. The greatest act of faith is for me to be able to look into the mirror of God's Word and see all of my sin, all of my flaws, all of my deformity, to see that as it is in the mirror of God's Word and believe that God unconditionally loves me. Now that is faith. That is faith.

I think faith is perfected in assurance about God's love. I am assured of that. A man or a woman who is assured of God's love to many will almost look lazy, will almost look too at peace. In a world where spirituality is marked out by activity and striving to get the most crowns a person who truly believes rests in Jesus Christ and Christ alone.

Now he says that, “God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.”<sup>12</sup>

What does he speak? What do you...? Read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and what do you hear about this Abel fellow? What do you hear about him? You hear a lot. He believed God. What was the great testimony? What was the great testimony? He believed God. What is the greatest testimony? What is the greatest testimony that can be told about a man? He believed God.

The thing that Jesus said about Abraham, “He saw my day and rejoiced.”<sup>13</sup> That's right up there with believing God.

You know, all the titles that we look for are so worldly and carnal and pathetic. Man of God, preacher, man of faith, miracle worker, prophet, all of these different things. What

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<sup>11</sup> Hebrews 11:4

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> See John 8:56

are some titles that we really ought to want, desire? Titles, healthy, spiritual, sound titles. What are they?

He believed God. He saw Christ's day and he rejoiced in it.

I so love John, the apostle John. He is just...he is so refreshing to me for one reason. When he was young he sent his mother to lobby for him. He wanted a title. He sent his mother to lobby for him. "Mom, just go up and talk to him. And, you know get...right or left I don't care. Just get me on the right or the left. That's all I want, just right or left. That's what I want."

When he writes his gospel this is his title, the one that Jesus loved.

Now look at this. Not the one who loved Jesus, that's the most beautiful thing about it. But the one that Jesus loved.

The song...and I have nothing against this song. It is a beautiful song. "Oh, how I love Jesus." But it is so hard for me to sing that song. I find very little in my love for Jesus to sing about. But oh how Jesus loves me.

You see, it is not a contest about who can love him the most. It is the fact that none of us would love him at all, but he loved us first. It is all about him. It is not about titles. It is not about doing great things. It is just about believing him.

And you say, "Oh, I already got that done."

Oh, really?

"I've done that."

Brother Charles tells me about a person that one time somebody was going to come and preach on faith and someone got up out of the church, I think, and walked out and said, "I've already heard the message on faith. I know all about that."

But don't you see? I want this just to be so personal in your heart. I want you to think about something, that if you just use the word "disobedient" it is so legal and cold and impersonal.

"Well, I disobeyed. I disobeyed the law. I disobeyed the law."

If that was all it was I wouldn't have much of a problem with that. But when you put it this way, not, "I disobeyed the law," but, "I proved once again today that I do not ascribe much worth to the character of God. I proved today that I don't believe God is who he says he is."



Young person when you...when you turn your eyes towards the sensual, it is not that you just did something immoral and you broke a law. It's you saying, "I don't believe God is good and I don't believe he is right." You are making a declaration with your disobedience about your view point of the character of God. "I don't believe him." Either that or you are a lunatic.

You say, "What do you mean?"

A lot of old preachers always associated sin with insanity. Sin is being insane. And it really is. But you think about this. You say you believe in a...in *the* benevolent, all wise God, all benevolent, all wise God. And you say that you believe that all his words are true as though it was more than silver tested in a furnace seven times.

Now think about that. This...this...this...this declaration that you have made, "I believe that...I believe in the all benevolent, all wise God who has spoken with an infallible perfect word and now I am going to go disobey and now I am going to go the other way." That's insane.

"I believe it when God says that disobedience and sin leads to death. Let's go sin."

"I believe that this will wreck my home. I'll do it."

"I believe that this will send me to an eternal hell. Ok, let's go."

These are frightful things. These are realities. I hate to keep using the word "reality," but, folks, there is so much done in the name of Jesus Christ, so much said in the name of Jesus Christ that has no reality to it whatsoever. It is word. It is veneer, no reality.

Now he says, "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death and he was not found because God took him up."<sup>14</sup>

Now, what does it mean by faith? This is very important because most people when they read this they go...when they think of Enoch's faith they are thinking at the moment that he was taken up. It's like, you know, he's walking and all of the sudden this chariot of fire or whatever comes down out of heaven, throws the door open and he has got to believe whether or not he is going to get in this thing or not.

Is that what it means? That this is this one great moment, this act of faith that he was taken up into heaven. He believed God to take him... That is not what this talking about.

What this is talking about is a man who lived a life of faith, a man who lived a life of faith.

I want to tell you something. All of us, most of us believers have seen God either through us or been in the presence when God has done something miraculous, when God

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<sup>14</sup> Hebrews 11:5

has done something supernatural, maybe save a person or a special deliverance or something like that. I want to tell you something. When that happens, when God shows up and lays the entire room on the floor weeping, it doesn't require a lot of faith.

Sky breaks open, chariots of fire come down and ask you to get in. It doesn't take a whole lot of faith. But it does take a whole lot of faith for that pastor to get up at six in the morning, five in the morning or whatever and go out and get the snow off the window of his car and get in that old beat up car and drive to the office to pray for the same people that he has been praying for for the last 15 years without seeing much improvement, to preach one more sermon that people are going to forget, a lot of them, before they even get to the coat rack, to keep living in obedience in a sensual, wicked world, to walk daily, daily, daily.

You see, I have found out and discovered in my life that there are not a lot of great things, not a lot of great big things that happen. The Christian life is one of daily step by step walking with God which leads to some mighty great things.

So many...when I deal with young guys that come to talk to me from seminary or college or something they are...they want to get to the top of the hill, but they don't want to walk there.

So many people...you know, I see so many people nowadays that just are chasing around an experience, going to meetings and going anywhere they hear something going on and going there to get there. They want to get on top of that mountain, but they don't want to walk to the mountain. They want to jump on someone else's mountain.

The thing about it is the Christian life, being a life of faith, is not about just God doing all these great supernatural things in front of you and you can see them and they gloriously promote you and move you on to greater things. No. It is walking day by day with him.

I wish sometimes we had a video of the life of Abraham, the life of Moses and the life of all different men, even the life of Peter and the life of Paul.

You know, if you look at how much we know about their lives, we just get little pictures, a few days are revealed to us out of their entire life.

David goes out, slays a giant. Have you ever thought about all the things he had to do before he got there, all the little promptings and things of God working in his life ever since his childhood, little acts of faith and little acts of belief, little acts of obedience? And then he slays this thing and ends up going back to the sheepfold again.

Or Abraham, you know, God comes and does all this stuff and how many years did he walk and God didn't say anything to him? Nothing.

Being a man or a woman of faith is not marked by the fact that all these great things are constantly happening in your life. It is marked by the fact that God maybe has only

spoken once, the day of your conversion and needs not speak again because you believed, you believed.

The old lady, the kid that just got out of Greek class and he wanted to impress his church [?] so he goes and he, you know, he uses the old Greek double negative thing, you know, when Jesus said, “I will never leave you,”<sup>15</sup> in Greek it is really like almost a triple negative, “No, I will never leave you never.” And so he is up there and he is preaching and he tells this congregation, he says, “Now, this just doesn’t say it once. Jesus is saying it three times to make it extra clear.” And after he gets done he comes down out of the pulpit and a little old lady walked up to him and said, “Young man, you might need to hear it three times, but I only need to hear it once and I believe it.”

And that’s the same way. Faith. Faith. Faith.

I’m discipling a group of young guys and they are all crazy about the *Lord of the Rings* movies and they were talking about it, about the king and all this different stuff in these movies and I looked at them and I said, “You like those movies?”

“Yeah, boy, I like those movies.”

I said, “What do you like about them?”

“Well, you know, the king and he is just so brave and he is courageous and then, you know, the legalist, the elf and the dwarf and all these, they are so faithful. They’ll fight. They’ll die for him.”

And I said, “But why do you like that?”

And they said, “What do you mean?”

I said, “Why does that appeal to guys like you?”

And they said, “Well, why wouldn’t it appeal to guys like us?”

I said, “Because you orks.”

And they said, “What do you mean?”

I said, “You guys like these guys on the screen, but in real life you are nothing but a bunch of orks or worm tongue or that other guy. You are faithless. You don’t walk day by day with the master. You don’t fight. You are not willing to spill blood. You can’t even turn away from a wicked program on a television set. So don’t talk to me about faithful men appeal to you. You are nothing but a bunch of orks.”

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<sup>15</sup> See Hebrews 13:5

You see here's...this is...I talked with these guys and sometimes the only way I can reach them is to talk about the *Lord of the Rings* and I tell them, I go, "Look. Had any of you guys ever read Plato?"

And they go, "No."

I said, "Ok, throw that out. Let's go back to the *Lord of the Rings*."

Plato had a thing about caves and shadows and about what is real and what is just the shadow of what is real. And what you and I need to realize is this. This world we are living in is not the real stuff. It is the shadow. And what God tells us in his Word about what is really going on, the cosmic conflict and the glory and the victory and the war and everything is real. That's the real stuff. And you have before you the greatest opportunity to do the greatest thing.

And what is that?

Believe God when he speaks. And to have the testimony even when you are dead, to have the testimony that still speaks. That man, that woman, that boy, he believed God. He believed God.

Will that be said about you? He believed his God.

I want to finish by just breaking it down for a moment. He believed his God about the Word of God. I mean, the Bible...God says so much stuff in the Bible about the importance of the Bible. He believed his God.

"Well, what do you mean by that?"

Well, he...if he wasn't working or something or occupied he was in the Word. He was looking at the Word. He was wanting to know the Word. He was memorizing the Word. He was reading the Word. He believed God about what God said about his Word. And he believed God about prayer.

You know all those promises, all those things that Jesus said. He believed God. He believed his God.

"Well, how do you know that?"

Did you ever look at his knees? [?] He must have prayed all the time. He believed what God said. He believed his God with regard to prayer. He believed God with regard his money.

"What do you mean by that?"

He used what God gave him, whatever resource, whether it be money, whatever he had, whatever talent was in his hand. He used it for God, for the kingdom of God. He used it according to God's Word. I want to put it that way. It would be better than to say kingdom because kingdom is too spiritual.

What do I mean?

If I say he used the money for the kingdom and for only the kingdom, then many of you will think, "Ok, I don't need...I need to stop buying clothes for my children. I don't need to have a house," and you just go crazy on me.

But what I mean is everything in the Bible with regard to money he sought to obey, in the kingdom, in his family, in absolutely everything. He sought to be a good steward. He believed God with regard to that. He believed God with regard to his mortality and his time. He knew that life was fleeting. He knew that it was nothing more than a shadow and so he redeemed the time because the days are evil. He sought to use his time for the fulness according to the Word of God which meant sometimes he separated from people and prayed for days and sometimes he took his children on vacation. But that is part of it, too. He believed God with regard to his wife, that she was a gift. She believed God with regard to her husband that he was a special trial sent by God.

They believed. Do you believe God?

And I am not just talking about this evangelical, "Yeah, I believe him. I received Jesus in my heart. Well, I did that."

Faith is not a flu shot. It is not something...If faith is past tense with you, you are lost. At your conversion you didn't just, "I believed God." No, you began to believe God and you believe him still. You began to repent and you repent still. And with your faith and with your repentance it is supposed to get deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper.

Young person, who do you believe?

The only thing I would have to do is go to your house. I could go to your house right now, stay there about 20 minutes and watch you without you knowing it and I'll know who you believe. I can go in your room, look around what's there and I will know. I'll know whether you are lost or saved pretty much.

You say, "Well, judge not, let ye be judged."<sup>16</sup>

Twist not Scripture, lest ye be like Satan, because that is not what that verse means. If there is no fruit, be afraid, be afraid.

Do you believe God? Those of you who are young and thinking about getting married, let me ask you a question. Are you believing God? Are you believing your emotions or

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew 7:1

some feeling? You believe in God when he says you cannot be together with an unbeliever? Are you believing God when you are looking for possibly a husband and you realize this guy can be no spiritual leader so he can't be your husband at least not right now? Are you believing God to weight, young man? Are you believing him that he says if you do that it will go well with you? Are you submitting to your parents out of faith? Some of you, many of you are home schooled. And that's a good thing and a terrible thing all at the same time. You can learn to do things by rote. You can learn to do things externally. Are you doing them by faith? If your parents turned their back tomorrow or dropped dead tomorrow would you continue in the path that they have marked out for you? Or would you run like a wild dog cut off a leash?

Are you doing it by faith? Are you submitting to your parents by faith because it is the first promise given? It is the first commandment given with a promise.

Many scattered things said tonight. I hope that somehow, somewhere, something edified you tonight.

We are going to continue on with this tomorrow night and Sunday. But we are going to turn more from this, of our faith, to the faithfulness of God.

I have seen God in my lifetime do so many things, so many great and marvelous things. Even just this last week something untold. It is because of his faithfulness and not because of some self generated faith on my part. It is because of his holiness and not mine. What I want you to see is you might not be the greatest demonstration of faith, but he is a faithful God. And if he has set his seal upon you he will be faithful until the end because his reputation is at stake. His reputation is at stake. And he will not allow that reputation to [?].

Let's pray.