

Faith

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Date: 24 December 2023

[0 : 00] Let's begin our worship this evening by singing to God's praise. We're going to sing in Psalm 18, the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 18 on page 20 of the psalm book. We're singing from verse 21 down to verse 30.

Psalm 18 at verse 21, page 20 of the psalm books. Tune is Duke Street. For I have kept the ways of God from him. I have not turned away. I have not strayed from his decrees, whose statutes ever with me stay.

We'll sing from verse 21 to 30 to God's praise. I have not turned away. I have not strayed from his decrees.

This, the Jews ever with me stay. The Lord my God.

The Lord my God.

[1 : 31] Since in his sight my hands were thee. The Lord my God.

The Lord my God. The Lord my God. The Lord my God. The Lord my God. The Lord my God.

The Lord my God. I will stand on you, but with a good value I should.

You saved the humble and the mean, but bring the proud of their height.

You, Lord, will keep my power, and all that hurts my darkness, change to life.

[2 : 55] Well, from God I can advance, and it's such good and right and all.

And with the aid my God will hear, I can be more than any more.

For perfect is the way of God, no choice than within His Word.

To all who could bear trust in Him, I should have met you, Jesus, Lord.

Amen. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, as we continue our worship of you on this yearday, we are thankful to be able to draw near to you, to be able to call upon your name, to be able to sing praise to you, to be able to open your Word and to have it at our very fingertips and to have it in our ears ringing this evening.

[4 : 32] For you speak to us powerfully and mightily through your Word. We thank you that it points us towards you and all your goodness to us through your Son, the power that you have over all creation, that all things were made through Him and by Him and for Him.

And we thank you too, Lord, that your Word reminds us that you are the constant one, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, that we see our own lives and we see the world in which we live with all the many questions that we may have and others may have, and yet ignoring the answers that are found in your truth, ignoring the answers that would show us our life through your lens and by your light. And yet we as a people are so guilty and so often of just walking in the darkness. But we thank you that your Word is light. And we thank you that the Psalm that we have sung reminds us of that, that you, Lord, will keep my lamp aflame. God turns my darkness into light. We thank you that that was the testimony of the Psalmist very long ago. But we thank you too, Lord, that these words remind us as your people that you are the one who sustains us, that you are the one who keeps us. You are the one who keeps faith with his people. You are with faithful people. You keep faith, the Psalmist said. And we thank you, Lord, for a people of faith. No matter how we feel our faith is, whether we feel strong in our faith or whether we feel weak, we thank you that faith is not about ourselves, but the one in whom our faith is placed. And that we have a great high priest, that we have one who we come to and look to this evening, who is greater than all, who is above us and whose ways are far above our ways, whose thoughts are far above our thoughts. And yet the one who we can come and come into relationship with the one who we can know as our Lord and as our God.

And so we pray that as we come to your word anew this evening, that you will speak to us through it, that you will minister to all our hearts by it, that your word will continue to sustain us, to nourish us, to keep us, and to build us up in our faith, to strengthen us day by day.

[7 : 09] And no matter what comes our way, for as we turn to it this evening in the book of Hebrews, we are reminded of a people who were in many ways challenged, in many ways that they were being pulled in different directions, just as we are today. Yet their faith was to be secure and grounded and to be of full assurance for their faith was in Christ. And we pray, Lord, for your church and for your people, not just here, but far and wide as so many churches lose their faith in your word. So many churches change to suit the ways of this world, change the word to suit the tickling of the ears of the people around us. But we pray, Lord, that your word will be ever faithfully preached here and to all ends of the earth, that as you have your people, as you have your preachers, as you have all who will be witnesses for you to all ends of the earth, that your word will be kept pure, that your word will be according to what you have taught us in your scriptures, that we will not deviate from it or turn away from it in any way, but that we will remain faithful to it.

And we thank you for how you have done that down through all the generations. We know that attacks on your word are nothing new. There is nothing new under the sun, as your word tells us. And though people will turn away, we thank you that you are a slug God who calls, calls a people to repentance, calls a people to turn to you and to be saved. And we pray that as the gospel goes out today, that will go out in your power and by your spirit, that will accomplish great things, that as it is heard everywhere, Lord, that your word will perish into the hearts of people, that it will perish into the darkness of this world, that it will shed your light of the gospel of the glory of God in your son Christ Jesus. That at this time of year, Lord, when we see so much of a Christmas season around us, we pray to see Christ. We pray to see and know more of him and to hear more of him and that people would know more of him, the Savior who was born for this world. So we pray, Lord, that you will hear your praying people, that you will draw near to us and all your people this night, that you will shelter them, that you will keep them, that you will uphold them and strengthen them. And we thank you that we can commit each other into your care and into your keeping, that all that we seek to do in your name, as we seek to live our lives, as we seek to walk with you, as we seek to serve you with all our hearts, that we can know your great presence with us, that we can know your strength for each and every day. And we thank you that that is true for whatever our circumstances, for whatever is going on in our lives, be it the time of excitement and joy at Christmas time for so many, as we see family and friends visiting and coming and going over these days. We pray your blessing on our homes and our families, all who travel, all who are gathered together, Lord, to know your peace and to know your blessing, to know your goodness upon us.

But we know too, Lord, that for some and maybe even for many, there is much sorrow and sadness. There are many things that trouble us. There are many things that will make us ponder and wonder about the world in which we live, the lives that we live, all the things that go on either around us in our own families or our communities or even in our own hearts. We know that there are many troubles that we have to face up to many challenges. And yet we thank you that faith is the key there as well, to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author, the perfecter of our faith. And so we pray, Lord, that you will strengthen the weak knees, that you will uphold the feeble arms, that you will give grace, O Lord, as it is needed for every situation, in homes and families and hospitals, in homes for the old age and our community as a whole, Lord. May we know your grace and your mercy upon us. We do particularly pray for those for whom this is a time of great pain and grief and the loss of loved ones, be it recently or in the past, Lord. We know that times of year such as this, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, it brings with it much emotion. And so we look to you as the God of all comfort, the God of all grace, to surround and to uphold and to uplift people, Lord, who are feeling down, to help them in their great need, to know your comfort, to know your presence. We commit those who are unwell at this time as well, be it at home or in hospital. We commit them to your care, be it here around us or in other parts of our country or throughout the world, Lord. We know there are so many different needs around us, but we thank you that we can cast our cares upon you, for you care for us. You have loved us with an everlasting love, a steadfast love, an unchanging love. And so we pray for these promises to be very precious to many at this time, to know your nearness, to know your peace guarding minds and hearts. We pray for your gospel, for the word of God as it goes out, that you will bless it, that you will be the power behind it, to bring sinners to repentance, to build up your people, to keep us praying, to keep us looking to you as we come to the end of another year and as we look, God willing, to a new year, that we will go forward in your strength, that we will go forward with our faith and confidence and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is with us, the one who is near. So,

Lord, may you bless us and continue with us. Bless your word as we turn to read it now. Watch over us, we pray. Guard us and go before us in the week ahead, Lord. Keep us close to you and remain, O Lord, close to us as we ask all things with the forgiveness of all our sins, confessing them anew before you this night. Our sins there are many, but we thank you that your mercy is more.

[13:57] So, Lord, hear our prayers and go before us now as we ask all in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll turn to sing again in God's praise. We're singing in Psalm 86 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 86, page 341. We're going to sing from verse 8 down to verse 11. Psalm 86 at verse 8.

Lord, there is none among the gods that may with thee compare. Like the works which thou hast done, not any work is there. All nations whom thou made shall come and worship reverently before thy face, and they, O Lord, thy name shall glorify. We're going to sing from verse 8 to 11 on the tune is of the Lord. We're going to sing from verse 8 to 11 on the tune is of the Lord. We're going to sing from verse 8 to 11 on the tune is of the Lord. We're going to sing from verse 9 to 11 on the tune is Choir to thee, and my God, I God thyself alone.

Give me thy way, and yet thy truth, O Lord, then walk with I.

Unite my heart, that I thy way, make thee continually.

[17:22] Let's turn to read God's word together. Now we're reading in the book of Hebrews. I'm taking our reading in chapter 10 at verse 19. Hebrews chapter 10 at verse 19.

We're going to read down into chapter 11 and down to verse 6 in chapter 11. Hebrews chapter 10 at verse 19.

You'll find this around page 1210. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope, without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting them to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

[19:04] Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and who has profaned the blood of the covenant, by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace.

For we know him who said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But recall the former days, when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession, and an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward, for you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised.

[20:21] For yet a little while, and the coming one will come, and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith, and preserve their souls. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

For by it the people of old received their commendation. 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. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous. God commending him by accepting his gifts, and through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found because God had taken him. Now before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God.

[21 : 38] 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.

And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. But before we turn back to that passage, we'll sing again to God's praise, this time in Psalm 62 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 62. I'm going to sing from verse 5 to verse 8. Page 294 of the psalm books. Psalm 62 at verse 5.

My soul wait thou with patience upon my God alone. On him dependeth all my hope and expectation. He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he.

He only is my sure defense. I shall not move it be. We'll sing from verse 5 down to verse 8 to God's praise in the Tunis St. Lawrence.

[22 : 44] my soul wait thou with patience upon thy God alone.

On Him the end of all my hope and expectation.

He only my salvation is and my strong rocket's team.

He only is my sure defense, I shall not do with thee.

In God my glory place it is and my salvation sure.

[24 : 01] In God the rocket's of my strength, my refuge most secure.

He made the place your confidence in Him continually.

Faithful in glory, and your heart, God is the refuge high.

Amen. We can turn back together this evening to look at Hebrews chapter 11 in particular.

although as you see as you read through from verse 19 down into chapter 11 there is a theme of continuation there before us as we will see.

[25 : 10] We're going to look together this evening at a small word that stands out in the midst of this passage that we've read and think about this word as we approach the end of another year and think about our lives and our outlook on life and our hopes may be going forward as a people. The word that we're going to look at is a word that many songs have been written about both in a Christian context and also in a worldly context too. It's a word that is often discussed.

The people of the world will tell us that we need this in differing circumstances but the foundation of it is what is important and what is ultimately usually different when people discuss it.

But the word that we're looking at ultimately without being rooted in God and his word and his truth is of no use.

And what is that word? I'm sure you've maybe guessed already what it is just reading through from verse 19 and into chapter 11 which is this great passage that speaks about the word that we're going to think about.

The word is faith. Faith. It's just a small word and yet it's a powerful word. It's an important word. It's a key word for us.

[26 : 38] Who or what is our faith in? How do you define faith? How would you think what is faith? How would you define that for yourself this evening?

Some people will talk about faith in just a very general sense or a very vague sense. People's faith can be different depending who they are or where they are.

You might look it up in the dictionary and look for a definition of what faith is there and what will it tell you. Some definitions say this. It's a complete trust or confidence in someone or something.

And there's an element of truth in that but it's not the whole truth because that leaves it very open-ended. If it's just left us in someone or something then our faith is not clearly defined.

But what the Bible speaks about when it speaks about faith is very clearly defined. It's very clear to us and especially as we read in this passage it's very clear to us what faith is.

[27 : 49] Because the Bible gives us a focus for our faith. And it's not just a vague sense of faith being in someone or something but in the Lord our God.

So there's a clear definition for us. And as we read here in both Hebrews chapter 10 from verse 19 speaks about the full assurance of faith.

And then going into chapter 11 it's that great passage that tells us about these great examples from the Old Testament who by faith did so much.

We see what faith is. But it begins with this in verse 1 where it kind of defines faith for us. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for.

The conviction of things not seen. Or the evidence of things not seen. It is not blind.

[28 : 57] It has clear focus. And that's what the writer of the Hebrews is doing as he writes. He speaks so much throughout this book about faith in different circumstances and in different ways.

If you go back to chapter 6 verse 11 and 12 there he speaks about faith. And it says, And it says, We desire each one of you to show the same earnestness, to have full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

So he's there almost leading us into where we are now in chapter 10 and 11. So that you may not be sluggish.

But what he says just before that is interesting. So that you may not be sluggish. Now it's a time of year when we're all in danger of feeling sluggish.

Maybe even you're coming to church this evening you're feeling sluggish because you've eaten so much today. And over the course of the week there'll be times when we feel sluggish because we've tucked into too much of the wrong things so often.

[30 : 18] And that's what the writer to the Hebrews is saying too. If we are feeding or overindulging in the wrong things we are going to become sluggish.

If we are listening to the wrong voices, if we are listening to the wrong truths, if we are listening to the wrong definition of what faith is we are going to become sluggish.

And there's always a danger as Christians of becoming sluggish. But he's saying but to be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

To keep ourselves focused. To keep ourselves on the right track. And that's what chapter 10 is doing in Hebrews.

It speaks about having confidence in the finished work of the Lord. It speaks about having confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of those who believes.

[31 : 23] And in having this confidence, this full assurance of faith, we are able to draw near to God. We are able to come into his presence.

To hold fast our confession as he speaks about in chapter 10. And to consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

There's all these encouragements which is moving on from being sluggish to being exercised, to being healthy, to growing together in the Lord.

And it's all got this foundation of faith. So the writer to the Hebrews is writing to a people who are feeling shaken in many ways.

Their faith is being shaken by other things that they're being taught and hearing. Other people trying to pull them back to what they were in the past. Relying on the old ways of the sacrificial system or the Old Testament ways of the priesthood.

[32 : 24] Instead of having confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus as it says in verse 19. Confidence in the right things.

Confidence in the Lord. And then they were being reminded at the end of chapter 10 how though they may lose all their earthly possessions. Though they may lose so many things that they feel are so important in life and which we can feel are so important.

They're not lasting possessions. That's what the writer to the Hebrews is telling them there in verse 34. That they have a better possession and an abiding one.

Therefore do not throw away your confidence which has great reward. Confidence. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The relationship with God. And that's what faith is. It's a relationship with God. A very personal relationship.

[33 : 29] And that's what we are to seek to have. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Confidence in him. Just like Paul wrote to the Romans. That great chapter.

Chapter 8. He speaks about all the different challenges in this world. But he says in verse 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

There's a question. But there's also an answer. In verse 39. Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can take this abiding possession away from us. Who have faith in him. And that's what leads us into chapter 11.

As you see, verse 39 concludes with a response as to how we are to live. We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed.

[34 : 29] But of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Again, it's just this confidence, this faith in the Lord Jesus.

That is what is needed. And that's what the writer expands on in chapter 11. And we want to just focus on for a few moments this evening.

Thinking about this word faith. First of all, we want to ask, what is faith? And secondly, we want to see, what is our life without faith?

What would it be like? And then thirdly, by faith. What is life like? What are our lives to look like living by faith?

So the first thing is, what is faith? Well, faith is not something we do ourselves. When we read in the letter to the Ephesians, we have that great reminder that we are saved by grace through faith.

[35 : 39] Faith is what God gives to his people. It is a gift from God.

Therefore, behind that, there is substance. If it is a gift from God, that is what the writer to the Hebrews here expands on.

When you think of what it says in verse 6, the middle of verse 6, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

You must believe that he exists. Do you? There's a simple question in that. Do you believe that God exists?

If you do, you're probably, we're now in the minority in this world, believing in the God of the scriptures that we have before us. But it says, you must believe that he exists.

[36 : 45] And in believing that he exists, you realize faith is not then just a blind leap. There are those who feel like to live by faith is the life of a fool.

It's foolish to believe in this nonsense that the Bible teaches. But as we've looked at recently, it's the fool who says in his heart that there is no God.

There is the fool. And that's what the Bible is showing to us. Verse 26 of chapter 10 makes it so clear for us. For if you go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there is no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, it says in verse 31 of chapter 10. And yet there's no fear of God.

But if we believe that God exists, then we realize that he is the God who is able to judge. And the only way away from that judgment is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who came to save us from that judgment.

[38 : 01] So faith is not just a leap in the dark. Faith is not just a crutch that people lean on. Faith is not just something that we look to when there is nowhere else to turn.

Faith is a sign of strength, a sign of courage, recognizing our weakness, recognizing our inability, but looking to God who is able to save.

The shorter catechism for us gives a great answer to what the Christian faith is. In question 86, the question is asked, what is faith in Jesus Christ?

And the answer, it's not a long answer, but it's worth remembering and recalling often, because we can so often overcomplicate what faith is.

But here, listen to this, faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

[39 : 06] The gospel has so much to give, because it offers to us salvation.

Faith is so much more than just blindly walking around. Faith is so much more than saying, oh, well, if God is going to save me, he'll do it.

Faith asks questions. Faith is offered to us in the gospel. And faith is what we need to receive and rest upon for our salvation.

Faith is leaning on God and all his promises. As one person put it, faith is when God says, I will lead you.

Faith responds, I will follow. I will go. And this should be the attitude for ourselves, for every Christian, for everyone who is seeking the Lord.

[40 : 25] It is to hear the offer of the gospel, that Christ died for our sins, that we are to believe in him, that we must believe in God, that he exists, and that he rewards those who seek him.

So faith has a substance. Faith, we see before us, as the substance of the word of God. Faith has conviction.

It has evidence. When we look around us, we see the world that God has created. We see that we are made in his image.

We see it being defined to us here in this great passage. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the convictions of things not seen.

Now, this context of chapter 11 is so much looking to the Old Testament, looking to many of the characters from the Old Testament, and what they were looking at, it was by faith, not seeing what was ahead, that they went forward in faith, trusting God.

[41 : 44] It was seeing what the natural eye could not see, but looking forward, looking ahead. And faith needs that.

Faith, if we had all the answers, is not faith. Faith is confidence and assurance in the things that we hope for, the things that the Bible says are still to come.

It's a conviction of things that we don't see just yet, but we will one day. Faith is what keeps us looking. When you think of Thomas, one of the disciples in the New Testament, after the Lord had risen, and they had met and seen the Lord, but Thomas wasn't there that day.

But a week later, he was. And he saw the Lord. And he said, my Lord and my God. Because he'd said, unless I see his hands and his side, I will not believe.

But what did Jesus say to him? He said, you believe because you have seen. Blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed.

[43 : 00] They are those who look to him by faith. We have not seen what Thomas has seen. But we believe.

We believe. We believe in all that the Scriptures reveal to us. Even as you go through the book of Hebrews itself, in chapter 2, it speaks about the world to come.

In chapter 4, it speaks about eternal, the Sabbath rest. In chapter 9, it speaks about the internal inheritance. There's so much that it speaks of that is yet to come.

And how is it seen? By faith. By faith. That is how we are to live. This chapter goes on to show us so many examples of those who lived by faith when everything else around them seemed lost or absurd or impossible.

Faith took them forward. And as we come to the end of another year, as we go on, God willing, into a new year, are we going forward in faith?

[44 : 14] Into the uncertainty, into the unseen, but trusting God, going on by faith. chapter 12, which follows on.

Again, it just highlights the importance of living by faith. Chapter 12, verse 1 says, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses that's expanded on in chapter 11, it says, Let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. The word of God is what gives us faith. It's the substance. It's the evidence for us. Faith is the assurance that God will do exactly what he has promised to do.

Do you have faith? Do you have faith in the word of God? Faith in God? Faith in the Son, Christ Jesus.

[45 : 48] Faith in the Holy Spirit to work. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Secondly, we see the challenge to us. What is life like without faith? What are the consequences of being without faith?

Well, in verse 4 and 5, we are told that by their faith, both Abel and Enoch pleased God. They pleased God.

That was their priority. He had pleased God. But then look at what it says in verse 6.

Without faith, it is impossible to please him. without faith, it is impossible to please him.

[46 : 50] Faith cannot, without faith, we cannot please God. And we surely know that ourselves already, for there have been days when we were without faith.

And without faith, we were so against God that there was no way to please him. we were shunning God. We were living in darkness.

Without faith, we are only trying to please ourselves or others. We're living selfish lives. We're living lives looking in the wrong place, trusting in the wrong things, just trying to please everybody.

And that's impossible. it won't be long until we will be coming into another election. An election time is a time when you hear politicians or would-be politicians speaking about everything that they're going to do to please a people.

And they'll tell one group that they're going to do this to win their votes. And then they maybe contradict themselves to another group by saying they're going to do something that's completely different. And in a day such as we live in, when a modern age of technology, when everything's recorded, when everything can be brought together, we see they're contradicting themselves.

[48 : 12] And it's impossible to please everyone. But they just want to try and win votes. They want to try and get into parliament. Now is God, when he speaks to us, is he trying to win our vote?

Is he trying to please everybody? No. Because God makes it quite clear how we are to live. And if we live by faith, we're not going to please everybody.

But our aim should always be to please God. And the only way to please God is through faith.

Because without faith, we cannot please him.

And it may be that we are a bit like the politician. We're saying one thing to God. We're saying, yes, Lord, I believe. I believe that you exist.

We're saying, maybe I believe that you're my savior. fear. But only for a moment, until someone asks us a question, or until someone challenges us.

[49 : 28] I don't believe that. I don't believe the word of God. Because we're being pulled in different directions. We're trying to keep everybody happy. But it's the impossible task.

It's impossible to please God without faith. And these two words underscore for us just that when it says in verse 6, without faith, it is impossible to please him.

And the other word is must. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and rewards those who seek him.

Faith is not just something nice that you can put into practice now and again. Faith is a life lived for God to please him alone.

Faith is not something that is divided that says, I believe that God made the heavens and the earth. I believe that he exists in one hand, but then you're led down another path when somebody else is, oh, I don't really believe that.

[50 : 50] Faith is something that is challenged constantly. That's what was happening in the days of the writer to the Hebrews. The people were being challenged, their faith was being shaken in many ways, but they were to have confidence in what was to abide and to last.

trust. And that is trusting in the Lord Jesus. I've told this story before, I think, but it's worth telling again about the tightrope walker called Blondin.

He was one who would walk across a tightrope suspended across Niagara Falls. and he would dance on the wire, he would run on the wire going across back and forth, no problem, and it attracted great crowds that cheered him on.

One time he was going back and forth with a wheelbarrow full of bricks, no problem again, and the crowd was cheering. And then he shouted out to the crowd, who believes that I could push a man across that wire in a wheelbarrow?

And all the hands went up shouting, yes, we believe that you could do it. And his response was to say, great, now who would like to volunteer?

[52 : 12] And suddenly all the hands went down. They were saying on one hand, they believed that he could do it, they'd seen him do it in so many different ways, but when it came to actually themselves being in that wheelbarrow, they weren't willing to commit.

They had no faith. And that's the challenge to each and every one of us. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

So are we just merely giving a token gesture of faith to God? Are we giving him just a small part of our life and saying, yes, Lord, I believe?

But when it comes to the challenge, do you believe? Will you stand up for your faith? Will you commit yourself fully to the Lord? Your hand goes down and you say, oh, I'm not sure I can fully commit.

Well, your faith is not complete. Without faith, you cannot please God. Martin Luther once said, God, our Father, have made all things depend on faith, so that whoever has faith will have everything, and whoever does not have faith will have nothing.

[53 : 41] Without faith, you cannot please God. Without faith, you face the challenge of that judgment that is so vivid and so clear in verse 26 downwards in chapter 10.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is a fearful thing to be before him without faith.

We need faith. And faith is offered to us in the gospel through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And so finally, we just want to see what it is to live by faith. What does it mean to live by faith?

Well, look at verse 2. For by it the people of old received their commendation. 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.

[54 : 50] By faith they received their commendation. The world often ridicules or despises the person who lives by faith, but that's not what counts.

We don't live for them, we live for God, to receive commendation from him, to hear those words, well done, good and faithful servant, to be faithful to him.

And if you have trusted in Christ as saviour, you are to live each day seeking not the approval of those who are around you, although we don't want to be deliberately offending or upsetting people, but we want to please God always, and to seek his approval.

And what does it look like to live by faith? Well, what you look at is what follows in the rest of this chapter. When you see all the great examples of those in the Old Testament who lived by faith, whose names are mentioned, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, you look at their experience, you look at their situations, everyone so different, everyone with so many challenges, even some you're thinking, how did they make it onto this list in Hebrews 11?

By faith. By faith. And you see, that's the key for us. So often we think it's the size of our faith, it's how great our faith is, but it's not.

[56 : 42] even when our faith seems weak and small, that doesn't matter. It's about who our faith is in. Is our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

What does faith look like to you? What does faith look like? Maybe you see it in other people around you, and you've said maybe to yourself, I wish I had the faith that that person has.

Well, what strength of faith that person has. And we see it, we see it in people who are going through trials that without faith you wonder how could they possibly go through.

But that person wouldn't tell you the strength is theirs or from themselves. They would say it's from God and by his grace. the strength that God gives because his grace is sufficient for all things.

And he gives grace to those who have faith, those who believe in him. Just like we are reminded in the shorter catechism, we receive and rest upon him alone.

[58 : 02] that is what faith is, receiving and resting on him alone. Like we were hearing this morning in this service, it's about pondering and laying up these things in our hearts, seeking a greater understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is where our faith grows. That is where our strength comes from. And the examples that you have in Hebrews 11, if you look at them, you see so many of them had mistakes in their lives, they had faults, they had sin, just like all of us.

And yet by faith they are there. And you look at the New Testament and you see what faith looks like, you see examples of faith going on through the New Testament and the Gospel of Mark.

Just to highlight a couple there, you see one was in Mark chapter 2, verse 5, when Jesus was there gathered in the house with many people crammering in to see Jesus and to hear him.

And their friends brought this paralytic to Jesus. They would not give up, they would not turn away, they dug their way down through the roof, brought him in before Jesus.

[59 : 21] And what did Jesus say? when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven.

When he saw their faith, what did it look like? An absolute dependence on him. They knew that there was no one else who could help but him.

The same is true in another account in Mark chapter 5 verse 33 with the woman with the issue of blood. When she came to Jesus, she came by faith.

If I could just touch the hem of his garments, he could make me well. And then Jesus says, who touched me?

The crowd is looking around and say, what do you mean who touched you? There's a crowd here, it could be anybody, but he knew that power had gone out from him. And the woman, it says in verse 33, the woman knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

[60 : 35] And he said to her, daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease.

She came in fear and trembling, falling before him. And what did Jesus saw? He saw faith. Your faith has made you well.

Go in peace. Both these situations, they were people who were helpless, just like we all are. And what you see in both of these related situations is it becomes about a relationship.

relationship. In Mark 2, Jesus says to the paralytic son, your sins are forgiven. In Mark chapter 5, he says to the woman, daughter, your faith has made you well.

There is this wonderful relationship. They are brought by faith to know the Lord Jesus in this personal way.

[61 : 50] And so where is your faith today? Do you have faith? Is it faith in a general sense?

Or is it saving faith that you find in Jesus Christ? do you have faith to go on? Your faith may be small, but it's not about the size.

It's about who it is in. And if it's in Christ, his grace is sufficient for all things.

Faith in Jesus Christ means we have all we need for now and for eternity. and that is our hope.

There's a hymn, I forget the name of the hymn, but the last verse of it says this, and it's looking by faith ahead to eternity.

My knowledge of that life is small, the eye of faith is dim, but it's enough that Christ knows all, and I shall be with him.

[63 : 03] There is faith, no matter how small it seems, no matter how dim it seems. It's not what our faith is in, or our faith at all, but who our faith is in.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the convictions of things not seen. Faith is about looking to Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.

May God bless these few thoughts to us. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 46a.

We'll sing from verse 8 to verse 11 to the end of the psalm. Psalm 46a, page 60 of the psalm book, verse 8 to verse 11.

The tune is Stroud Water. Come see the works the Lord has done, the judgments he commands, the desolations he has brought to pass in many lands.

[64 : 19] Then verse 10, be still and know that I am God, on earth exalted high, and all the nations of the world my name will glorify.

We'll sing from verse 8 to 11 to God's praise. Amen. Amen. He the words the Lord has done, the judgment he brought, the desolations he has brought to pass in many lands.

A very land for the earth, he makes all complex things, he shatters through, and spirit, and cheer, and grace is reign of peace.

Be still and know that I am God, on earth, they're exalted high, and all the nations of the world, my name will glorify.

The Lord Almighty is with us, to strengthen us sustain.

[66 : 28] For Jacob's law, our strong, the best, and fortress will remain.

Amen. After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right. We'll close with a benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.