

Vital Faith

by Brian Long

This sermon emphasizes the vital importance of faith in the body of Christ and in our personal Christian lives. It compares faith to vital organs that are essential for life, highlighting the necessity of faith for receiving blessings, grace, power, and the presence of the Lord. The speaker delves into the tragic consequences of unbelief, illustrating how faith acts as a channel for God's power and how it pleases Him. Various Bible examples are used to showcase the impact of faith and the need for unwavering trust in God's promises.

Scripture: Matthew 13:58, Luke 18:8, James 2:26, Matthew 15:21, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:22, Matthew 14:28

Topics: "Importance of Faith", "Consequences of Unbelief"

Description

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Transcript

I want to talk to you about something that is absolutely vital to the body of Christ. It's absolutely vital to us going into this camp this week. It's vital in each and every one of our Christian lives.

Now what does it mean that something is vital? I think of vital organs. We all have what they call vital organs. And those organs are organs inside your body that you can't live without.

You can lose a limb, you can lose an arm or a leg, and that would be terrible, but you can still live. They're not vital organs. But you can't lose your brain and live.

You can lose both eyes, as terrible as that would be, but those are non-vital organs. You can't lose your heart and live without your heart. That's a vital organ.

You can lose both thumbs, and it would be hard to function with your hands, but you can't lose both lungs. That's a vital organ. We have vital organs and non-vital organs.

There is something absolutely vital to the body of Christ, vital to our relationship with God. There are other things that are not vital. We don't all have to agree on our eschatology, but there are some other things

that we must agree on, that we must lay hold of.

And that which is so vital to the body of Christ, vital to each and every one of us that I want to talk to you about tonight, is faith. Faith is vital. That's a vital organ.

That's something that's absolutely essential to the body of Christ, to us growing in Christ, to us receiving blessing from the Lord, grace from the Lord, power from the Lord, the presence of the Lord. Faith is like a channel. We're saved by grace through faith.

You receive that grace of God through the channel of faith. We receive the promises of God through the channel of faith. The manifestation of His presence, everything, comes back to faith.

It's absolutely vital. I want you to see one verse. We're going to look at a few scriptures, but in Matthew chapter 13, a very sad and tragic verse in the Bible, Matthew 13 verse 58.

And maybe I'll just back up here to give us some context. Verse 53. It says, And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed thence.

And when He was coming to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Judas, and his sisters? Are they not all with us? Whence then has this man all these things? And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house. And this is the verse I want you to see.

And He did not many mighty works there. Why? Because of their unbelief. How tragic.

How tragic for that to be written across a person's life at the judgment seat of Christ. He did not many mighty works there because of your unbelief, Brian Long. That would be tragic.

He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. Can it be that God, we all know that He's able to do mighty works, can it be that God being able and even being willing to do mighty works somewhere, and yet not do those works, not because He is not able, not because He is not willing, but because He cannot find faith? And faith is the channel whereby the power of God flows. Faith is the channel which connects us to the power and presence of the Lord.

You know what the flip side of this is? Because of their faith, He did many mighty works. Because of their faith, He moved mightily in their presence. So you have both in the Bible.

You have here a group of people that did not experience the many mighty works of the Lord because of their unbelief. That one reason because of their unbelief. The children of Israel didn't go into the promised land for one reason.

Their unbelief. Their hearts were hardened because of their unbelief. They provoked God because of their unbelief.

They didn't receive the promises of God, the manifestations, the fullness of those promises because of their unbelief. But the flip side of that is there's another people whom God is looking for and whom God has found in the Scriptures that He did do mighty works. And He did give them promises and they did see the fulfillment of those promises because of their faith.

And we find that in Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11. And this chapter that's been called by some this Hall of Faith chapter, we read of men like Enoch, Noah, Moses, Abraham and Sarah, Rahab, Samson, David.

God wrote their names in His own book for one reason. They believed Him. They trusted in Him.

They took Him at His Word. They took Him at His promises. They believed God.

You know, there's another verse in Scripture that has gripped my heart. It's been on my heart for months now. It's like I can't shake it.

And it comes from the 18th chapter of Luke when Jesus said, when the Son of Man comes, He said, nevertheless, after teaching us to pray and not to faint, not to give up, He says, nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? He is looking. He is looking for faith in His people. He is looking for a people who will absolutely trust Him, take hold of His Word without wavering, laid hold of His promises, and believe Him.

Leonard Ravenhill said one day some simple soul is going to find this book, is going to read this book, and believe it. And we're all going to be embarrassed. Just simply take Him at His Word and believe Him because He's faithful and true.

So what is faith? Faith, it says in verse 1, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. By it, the elders obtained a good report. In other words, because of their faith, they got an A+.

That's what God gave them. They obtained a good report. And then He names them all.

I want you to see again how vital it is. Verse 6, But without faith, it is impossible to please Him. It's impossible to please God.

You may be pleasing to man. You may be pleasing yourself. But without faith, you cannot and you are not pleasing God.

You can do a lot of things. You can absolutely know Scripture. You can quote it chapter and verse by the books of the Bible.

You can preach eloquently. Be very intelligent. You can pray ten times a day.

You can fast three times a week. And all of that without faith does not please God. Without faith, you cannot please God.

He is looking for faith in the hearts of His people. Without faith, you cannot please God. Now, He names a few.

He starts off in verse 4 by reminding us of Cain and Abel. By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous. God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead, yet speaketh.

What was the difference between Cain and Abel's offering? They were different offerings, but what was it that caused God to accept and call Abel righteous and yet reject Cain's offering? What was it? Faith. By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. It's this one thing.

They could have brought the same offering. The absolute same offering. And one thing was missing.

Faith. One believed God, was putting all of his trust in God. The other came with unbelief.

Listen, brothers and sisters, all of our worship, every offering that we offer to God, must be done in faith. It must come from a heart that trusts Him, that believes Him, that takes Him at His Word. Everything we bring to the Lord.

You know, in the Old Testament, in Leviticus 2, verse 13, there's an interesting verse here. He says in Leviticus 2, verse 13, And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt, neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy kingdom to be lacking from thy meat offering. With all thine offerings, thou shalt offer salt.

God says, whatever offering you're bringing Me, make sure that it's seasoned with salt. Don't bring the offering without the salt. There must be salt.

That's under the Old Covenant. What does that say to us in the New Covenant? I don't have complete revelation on it, but can I submit to you what I think part of this is? That salt is faith. With every offering you bring to the Lord, make sure it's coming from a heart of faith.

All of our worship, all of our love, all of our adoration, all of our service, everything we do, say, go, let it be done in faith. From a heart that is not relying upon ourselves, but a heart that is relying upon God. That's what faith does.

Faith casts everything upon God. Rests everything upon Christ. You know, once there were two men that were on a boat and they were on a river that was headed for the Niagara Falls.

And that boat crashed. And they were both in the river. And so there were some people on shore that came to rescue them.

And they threw out a lifeline, a rope. And both of them laid hold of that rope. And as long as they had hold of that rope, they were safe and secure.

They would be brought to shore. But as they're waiting to be pulled in, hanging on to the rope, along came a large log down the river. And one of the men let go of the rope because that log looked bigger and safer.

And he laid hold of that log. And that log took him down the river and over the cliff. They never found him again.

The man who had kept hold of the rope was safe and secure. You know what that is? That's a picture of faith clinging to Christ. Laying hold of Christ.

We lay hold of the One who laid hold of you. And you are secure. But the moment that you cease to trust in Him and you start to look to yourself and you start to depend on your own strength, your own abilities, your own intellect, your own emotion, anything that's of the self life is that log, it's going to lead you over the cliff.

It profits nothing in the Kingdom of God. It's all of Jesus, none of me. When it comes to salvation, all of Jesus, none of me.

When it comes to walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, all of Jesus, none of me. Casting ourselves completely on Him. Resting in Him.

The One who will not drop you. The One who will not let you go. The One who has never lied.

Never broke a promise. Who is 100% faithful and true. You can trust Him.

That's faith. And so He says, bring everything, every offering, with salt, with faith. Now what does salt do? Salt preserves.

Brother Sam and I were talking about this earlier today. He said salt preserves. It pushes out the corruption.

And it affects all that which it encounters. So that's certainly what salt... Faith. It pushes out the corruption of doubt.

Of unbelief. How many of you know, let's say you're going through a trial together. Let's use the Apostle Paul as an example.

He's going through a major storm on a big ship. And everybody on board is terrified. Fearful.

So fearful for their lives, they're not even eating. And here's the Apostle Paul who's been in prayer and stands in the midst of that ship and says to everybody, now take courage. God has already told me there will not be one loss of life.

Here, you're hungry. Take some bread. Have something to eat.

One man changed the atmosphere of that entire ship. Why? Because he was full of faith. He believed God.

It pushed out the corruption of doubt and unbelief. But you know what else salt does? It makes us thirsty. It makes us thirsty.

And I wonder if there's anything that makes a person more thirsty for more of Jesus and what He will do in your life than hearing stories of faith and what He's done in somebody else's life. It does me. And that's why we need the body of Christ.

And we need each and every one to testify when God is doing something in your life. Testify. Proclaim it.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. And we hear those stories of faith. And what happens to us? We become thirsty.

We become hopeful. Faith rises in our heart. We say, well, if God did that in His life, in her life, then He'll do that in my life.

He's faithful to them. He will be faithful to me. And I love hearing stories of faith.

It makes me thirsty for more of Jesus. Stories like, take George Mueller of Bristol for example in the 1800's who cared for thousands of orphans. Thousands of orphans.

He loved them. He fed them. And He clothed them.

And millions of dollars were brought to that man and he never asked anybody for one penny. And he never begged. And he never borrowed.

What did he do? He prayed. And he believed God. And God provided.

And he fed all those orphans and cared for all those orphans for many, many years. There's a story told that one time the house mother came in and said, Mr. Mueller, all the children, there were 300 children at that time in this home. All the children are up.

They're all dressed. They're all ready for school. So we don't have any food for breakfast.

He said, have all the children go into the dining room. Have them all sit down. And they all sat down at the table over empty plates with bare cupboards.

No food. And George Mueller said to the children, he said, remember God always provides for us. God is always faithful.

Let's bow our heads, children, and thank God for the food that we are about to receive. There was no food in the house. He bowed his head and he prayed.

And then they waited upon God. And they didn't wait very long before they heard a knock at the door. They answered the door and in came the baker.

Mr. Mueller, I couldn't sleep all night. I was compelled with this strong impression to bake you bread and the children bread. So I baked three big batches, huge batches of bread.

It's still hot. Can I bring it in to the children? He said, bring it in. And the children had not only bread but hot bread right at that moment.

As they sat down to eat the bread, another knock on the door. Mr. Mueller, it's the milkman. The milkman's cart broke down right out in front of the orphanage.

He said, by the time I get somebody to fix the wheel, all the milk will be spoiled. Can I bring in the milk for the children? And all the milk he brought in. And the children had hot bread and fresh milk.

That's our God. He's true. You can trust Him.

You can believe Him. That's essential for our lives. It's essential, I believe, for us going into this camp together to be going in with a sense of expectation, of hope, of faith.

Now, what else does faith do? It believes what it cannot see. It believes what it has not yet seen. In verse 1, it's the evidence of things not seen.

George Mueller did not yet see the bread, but he believed God because he had a promise from God already. And so he prayed and he believed, and he believed God for bread that he couldn't see. Faith believes what it cannot see.

The Scripture says we walk by faith, not by sight, not by emotion, not by how we feel. We depend upon Christ who is unchanging. We change like the weather and the wind.

Sometimes we're happy. Sometimes we get sad. Sometimes we're vibrant.

Sometimes we're tired. We rely on the One who changes not, who is faithful, absolutely faithful 100% of the time. But faith also prays.

Faith prays. And faith prays with persevering, diligent prayer. He says in verse 6 of Hebrews 11, without faith it's impossible to please Him, for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He's a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

And you diligently seek Him in prayer. I think one of the most powerful illustrations of this is the Canaanite woman in Matthew chapter 15. You might turn there with me and we'll just look at this quickly.

Matthew chapter 15. Faith prays. Always prays.

And it perseveres in prayer. Matthew chapter 15 in verse 21 says, Then Jesus went thence and departed into the coast of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coast and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David.

My daughter is grievously vexed with the devil. Now imagine this. Some of us have daughters or granddaughters.

My daughter is grievously vexed with the devil. Her daughter was demon possessed. Where do you go? Who do you turn to? There's only one hope and she knows it.

And that's Christ. She comes to Jesus praying. Verse 23 says, But He answered her not a word.

Now how many of us, we pray about something and we don't hear anything and we stop praying? Faith doesn't stop praying. When you know something is the will of God and you know Jesus Christ is our only hope, you know there is no plan B, you don't stop praying. You persevere in prayer.

He answered her not a word. Well, she stays. And then she's given another cause for doubt and to give up.

The disciples came and besought Him saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us. Sometimes, not only are you not hearing from God, now you have the naysayers that say, Why are you praying about this? It's not God's will, brother. Just let it go.

It's not going to happen. You're wasting your time. Send her away, they say.

Does she go away? She doesn't go away. She's a woman of faith. Verse 24, But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

What is Jesus doing? How many of us, if we're praying, He doesn't answer us? His own disciples tell us to leave, and now He says, I'm not sent, but for the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Most of us would say, OK, Lord. Sorry, I guess I have no hope. What is her answer? What is her response? Then came she and worshipped Him.

She didn't get the answer she wanted yet. She still came and worshipped Him. That's faith.

That's trust. He's worthy. Whether you answer my prayer or not, you're worthy of worship.

I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to worship You, Lord, because You're worthy. And then she cries out again, Lord, help me.

That is a beautiful prayer. That's all you need to say. Lord, help me.

But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. What is the Lord doing? That sounds pretty discouraging. I don't believe He's calling her a Gentile dog as much as He's proving.

Not just to her, but everybody watching. This woman has something you don't have. She has tenacity.

She has faith. She's laid hold of God. And so her response in verse 27 is, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the Master's table.

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, and I believe He said it with a great big smile, O woman, great is your faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

You see what she did? She prayed and she persevered because she knew something was the will of God. And she knew Christ was her only hope. You persevere.

You don't stop. You don't quit praying and believing and seeking when you know something to be the will of God. And you know something that would bring glory to God.

You know, in America, years ago, in the days of the gold rush, there were men who would leave everything. They would forsake everything to go to this new land and start digging. In the side of a hill somewhere, in a cave somewhere, they would stake their claim because they believed they would find gold.

And they would keep on. And the stories are told there would be some that would just dig and work their hearts out for day after day after day. They would find nothing.

And then they would quit. Why did they quit? Because they didn't believe there was anything to find. After working so hard and persevering so long, they quit and they leave.

Then come in another man right behind him, dig in the same cave, and just a few days later, hid a whole vein of gold. If the first man would have just persevered, if he would have just kept on believing, I think sometimes we stop short. David Wilkerson said, the last half hour of faith is the hardest.

And we stop short of crying out to God and believing Him and trusting Him. Not going by what we see, but going by what He said. Faith prays.

Faith perseveres in prayer. Faith believes God. So, what do we need? Very simply, to exercise this kind of faith that pleases God, this kind of faith that is so vital in the Kingdom of God.

First of all, you just need to have a need. Probably all of us have some need tonight. Some need or some desire.

Some desire that will bring glory to God. Do you know what will bring glory to God at this camp? For God to come and manifest His presence and His power and do His will and fulfill His purpose and glorify His Son. He wants to do it.

That's a need. That's a desire. So you have to have that.

What's next? You must have a Bible promise. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. We're not standing on thin air.

We're standing on the unshakable truth of God's Word. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall never pass away, God says. So I need a Bible promise.

Lord, what do You say concerning my need? What are You saying concerning what You've put on my heart? Whatever the issue may be, I need a Bible promise. Then what do I need? I need to act. I need to pray and I need to obey.

I need to step out of the boat. Act. Why? Because James says faith without works is dead.

What does it profit you, my brethren? What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him? One translation says, what does it profit, my brothers, if what you confess doesn't correspond to what you do? That's not reality. If what I profess doesn't correspond to what I do. He says, be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only deceiving your own selves.

So faith is doing the Word of God. Faith obeys. Faith steps out of the boat.

It doesn't just speak words. It acts and obeys. I'll close with this.

There was a man from France who was one of the greatest tightrope walkers ever known. This was in the 1800's. And this man was the first man to ever stretch a rope across the Niagara Falls from Canada to America.

About a quarter of a mile. He stretches this tightrope across. The only man to ever do it.

He's 160 feet above Niagara Falls and he walks across Niagara Falls on this tightrope without falling off the rope. The people watched and they stood in awe. Then one day, he put on some stilts and he walked across the tightrope without falling.

They really were amazed. Then one day, he put a blindfold on and he walked across. Then the day came, it was announced, I'm going to go across with a wheelbarrow and a big sack of potatoes in that wheelbarrow.

And he walked across it. All that wheel had to do was slide off one side or the other and down they would go. But he made it across.

When he made it across, he said, Now, how many of you believe that I can put a grown man in this wheelbarrow and wheel him across to the other side? Oh, they just cheered. We want to see this. We know you can do it.

You're the greatest tightrope walker ever. We believe! We believe! He said, Now, I ask for one volunteer. Who will get in the wheelbarrow? And no one moved.

They professed one thing, but their actions didn't correspond. It's not just what we profess, brothers and sisters. It's what we obey.

Then you know whether you really believe. Then you know whether or not your faith is real. Peter, in the midst of that terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee, saw the Lord Jesus and said, Lord! If it's You, bid me to come to You on the water.

He prays. He believes. He hears from the Lord.

Come to me, Peter. Then he acts. He steps out of the boat and he walks on water.

He does the impossible because he's trusting in the Lord. We believe and then we obey. And faith is getting in the wheelbarrow.

And it's trusting. Jesus Christ has promised and He will not drop me. He is faithful.

He is true. This is vital to the body of Christ. A faith that trusts the Lord.

Come what may. And it will believe Him and trust Him without wavering. Lay hold of the promises without wavering.

And we pray and we persevere. Amen? Amen. Heavenly Father, I pray that Your words would sink deeply into our hearts.

That our vision would be full of Christ. Full of You, Lord Jesus. That our eyes would be fixed upon You.

That our heart would be gripped by the reality of Your presence. How awesome You are. How great You are.

How majestic You are. How mighty You are. How powerful You are, O Lord.

How able You are. So many things, Lord. Maybe there's needs right now.

And with man, they are impossible. But with God, all things are possible. I pray, Lord God, first of all, that You would forgive us, Lord, for every form of unbelief.

That You would forgive us for this sin, Lord, and we would repent of it even now. Every and any form of unbelief. How that has grieved Your heart.

It is sin in the sight of a holy God. Forgive me, Lord. Cleanse me completely of any form of unbelief and doubt.

Now, Father, fill our hearts with faith. Let faith arise in our hearts. Lord, You have promises in Your holy book that we're not walking completely in.

And I pray, Lord God, that You would renew them to our mind. They would become fresh to us again. As the brother shared earlier, even Scriptures we've read over and over and over again, but they become familiar with us.

And I pray that once again they would grip our hearts. They would cut us to the quick. And our eyes would be opened.

And we would lay hold, Lord God, of what You have spoken. Make us a people, Lord, of faith. Unwavering, unshakeable faith who trust You.

A people, Lord God, in whom You can say, I am well pleased because they believe You and they trust You and they persevere and they get in the wheelbarrow. They cast everything upon You, Jesus, in Your mercy and grace. Thank You for this.

Thank You for these precious people. Thank You for this church. Thank You for building Your church just as You've promised for building Your body.

Lord, we pray that You... I pray, Father, that You would take each and every one of us and do something with us that is far beyond, Lord God, what we could even ask or imagine. Something that's utterly disproportionate to who we are in and of ourselves. It's all of You, Lord.

It's all of You. And I pray, Lord God, we pray together that You would move mightily in this camp this week. That You would glorify Your name.

Exalt Your name, Lord Jesus. Hallelujah. We trust in You and we praise You with all of our hearts in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.

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