

Faith for Today

by Paris Reidhead

Faith is the principle of spiritual life, and it's the spring of patience and endurance.

Duration: 40:24

Scripture: Hebrews 11:3-29

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by expressing gratitude for God's presence and asking for His help in times of fear and uncertainty. The preacher then discusses the importance of faith and the different types of faith, emphasizing the need for a genuine, heartfelt faith in Jesus Christ. The preacher references the story of George Mueller as an example of someone to imitate in their faith. The sermon concludes with a general overview of Hebrews 11, highlighting the characteristics and work of faith seen in the Old Testament and emphasizing the power of faith in God's creation and in the lives of believers.

Transcript

Now you are going to understand that the resonance I have this morning is not due to a change in the speaking system. I wish it were. It would be a little easier to deal with.

But I am so glad that I am able to be here and that you are here. We have this time together in His Word. Shall we bow our hearts before Him? Father, speak to us this morning.

We are so grateful that Thou art here, that in Thee we live and move and have our being, and that Thou hast promised that when we meet in the name of the Lord Jesus, that He would be there to reveal Himself to us. We have eyes of our heart and ears of our spirit. We can feel His touch grant to us that ere we leave, each of us will know that we have not just been meeting with one another about Thee, but we have met with Thee.

And Thou hast found us out and found our need, and Thou hast ministered to us. Thank you for what you are doing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

During the past year, 1985, it seemed that very frequently when I turned on the television, I found that there were speakers from various parts of the country that were emphasizing the subject of faith. And as I listened to them, I gathered almost that somehow or other, faith had been invented in the early part of 1985, been discovered, and was something terribly new and terribly exciting. Well, the fact of the matter is,

it is not new, but it is exciting.

And those who have manifested this degree of excitement ought to be challenging us, ought to be encouraging us. But still, it is so important for us to realize that everything that is in the Word of God is ours. No one from any group, any quarter of the compass that brings out of this Word has anything that isn't ours.

We want the Word, all of the Word, nothing more than the Word, we won't go beyond it, nothing less than the Word, and we won't stop short of it, and nothing other than the Word. We want the Word. So it behooves us, then, to understand faith, faith for today.

And this just may be the beginning of a series of studies in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, because the more I read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the more I find that some who are encouraging others to exercise faith seem to stop with the sixth verse of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and fail to go on through to the conclusion of the chapter at verse forty. Now, I don't believe that we should neglect verses one through six. We ought to do that.

Nor do I believe that we ought to neglect verses seven through forty, and everything else the Word has to say about the subject of faith. Now, first, let's understand this, that in all of the Old Testament, faith is not used as a noun. It doesn't occur in the form of a noun.

Now, in Habakkuk, the second chapter, in the fourth verse, we do read, that Josh shall live by faith, but the construction is one where the translators were correct in translating it, but actually, it would probably be closer to the Hebrew if it were to be translated, that Josh shall live by steadfastness, or by being continuously steadfast. So, we've translated it faith. The King James has given it to us in that form.

We accept it in that form. And three other times in the New Testament, that same Habakkuk verse is quoted. For instance, in Romans, chapter one, verse seventeen, we are told, that the just shall live by faith.

Excuse me, I think that's chapter three. I can't read my own writing. But the just shall live by faith.

The emphasis is on the word just, justified. In Galatians, the third chapter, in the eleventh verse, we read that the just shall live by faith. The emphasis is on the word.

Living is an ongoing expression. And here in Hebrews 10 and 38, we would read it this way. The just shall live by faith.

And the emphasis is on faith. So, he is speaking, the writer of the Epistles to the Hebrews, as faith is the principle of spiritual life, and as the spring of patience endures. Now there are those that would have us think that faith is only instantaneous.

It happens immediately. But the whole of the portion read from thirty-five to thirty-nine had to do with casting not away our confidence, and the necessity for the need of patience, that after that you have done the will of God in believing, you might receive the promise. So, he wants us to understand that the experience of the saints in times past are to give to us the full understanding of faith.

Believers in all ages have exercised faith. It's not an invention of this time. It's that which characterizes everyone who ever walked with God.

Now, just for a moment, a general overview of this eleventh chapter. I'll give this to you again, but I want you to understand what we have in this eleventh chapter just from a synoptic view. Verses one and two give us a preliminary view of the characteristics and the work of faith.

Verses three to seven tell us faith as seen in the prophetic records of the Old Testament, or the Old World, in verses three, as that is the world before the flood. Verses eight to twenty-two give us the faith of the patriarchs. Faith in the obedience of patience and faith in sacrifice.

Verses twenty-three to thirty-one indicate to us the way the patriarchs exercised faith in conflict and in conquest. Verses thirty-two to thirty-eight show us how faith was active in the national life. Verses thirty-nine and forty are the conclusion which tell us that we too are going to have to exercise faith because the promises that the fathers had seen have not yet been realized and that we are now those who are going to continue to exercise faith.

Now that first portion, verses one and two, gives us marks and characteristics of faith. Faith always deals with the future and the unseen. And it always deals with regions that are not entered by direct physical experience.

You don't need to have faith in the chair on which you're sitting because you can test it, you can feel it, you can notice that the underwriters' laboratories have indicated that it is designed for the purpose in which you're using it. It doesn't require a great deal of faith because you can see it. Faith, therefore, has to do with the unseen areas of life and things that you can't handle in direct physical experience.

And it deals with everything in these two categories. The things hoped for, those of the future, the things objects not seen. These are the areas where faith is to be exercised.

And it has to do with the whole field of mental activity. A great deal to be said about that in the Scripture. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

Bring every thought into the captivity of Christ. Gird up the loins of your minds. Isn't it interesting that the only part of you over which God has given you complete control is your mind? You can't control what you see.

Lots of things you may not want to see are forced upon your vision. You can't control what you hear. Lots of things that you hear you may not want to hear.

You have no control over stopping. You can't control what you feel. If you think so, just stop the rain when you're out in it without an umbrella or a raincoat.

You don't. If you feel it, but you can't control it. Or the cold wind.

The only thing that you can control is what you think. Now, if that's true, and it is, then you're going to understand that faith as it relates to the mental capacities and abilities God has invested in you is of extreme importance. And it's also going to be related to your spiritual activity and your spiritual experience.

Here again, you're going to find that faith is the touchstone. Faith is the fulcrum. It's also the lever.

It's the tool. It's the lock. It's the hinge.

It's so vitally important in your spiritual life, mind. And all that relates to the objects and the events outside of our lives, outside of us, are covered by this shield of faith. So the object of faith is very, very wide.

Now, the office of faith, its object, we've just seen, is wide indeed. Now, what is its office? It's presented to us in two-fold way in Scripture. First, faith is described as a frame of mind.

A frame of mind. And a frame of mind which produces particular results. It has a two-fold function.

It's to be the proof or the test, the certification of that which is unseen. The unseen is established, proven, tested, certified by faith. That's part of its office.

To test, to prove what we don't see. But it's something else. It's also, faith gives existence to what doesn't exist.

By faith, God framed the world out of that which could not be seen. In other words, a frame of mind, God saw what he wanted. And then, God brought into being what he saw.

And he did it, we're told here, by faith. By faith, that which the world was made. Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which were seen were not made out of things which do appear.

Now, we understand that by faith, and by faith as well. Because elsewhere, the Lord Jesus, we are told, have faith in God, according to the King James translators. But you know, they struggled once in a while.

Things got a little hot for them, a little bit too juicy. And they didn't know quite what to do. Case in point, when the King James translators got a little bit carried away.

Remember the time when the lady that was sick came to the Lord and said, if I can touch the hem of his garment, I'll be healed? And he reached out and touched it, and she was healed. And it says, the Lord Jesus said, I perceive, according to the King James translators, that virtue has gone out of me. Well, now, everyone would understand that he had virtue and we didn't.

But that's not what it says. In the text it says, *dunamis*. I perceive that *dunamis*, power has gone out of me.

Now, why would the King James translators make that virtue? Because in Acts 1.8 it says, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, you shall receive *dunamis*. Now, could the translators say that the same thing is going to come upon us that went out of the Lord Jesus to heal the woman? So, to avoid that, they put in virtue and then power. But the fact is, it's the same word.

And it should be translated power in both cases. So, they have a little bit of problem now and then, do the translators. And that verse where it says, have faith in God, literally is this.

Have the faith of God. Have the faith of God. That's very strange, isn't it? You'll have the same kind of faith that God had.

And so, what God had was that when he spoke, what he said would be. Now, we have, in our generation, a little bit of insight into what happened. You know, I'm younger than I used to be.

I'm as young as I'll ever be, but I was younger than I am. And that was a long time ago. And I remember when my general science teacher checked me wrong because I, true and false, and it said, one of

selection, A, B, C, or D, or none of the above, you know.

And it was, the atom is the smallest unit of matter and it's indivisible, indestructible, unchangeable. And the answer, of course, was true, false, or none of the above. Well, I said false.

And I got it wrong. As everybody knew back then, the atom was the smallest unit of matter. Until that old, long-haired fella in Germany got talking around and came up with something that the world still doesn't understand.

And, least of all, E equals MC squared, that energy equals mass times the speed of light squared. And we discovered that matter wasn't made, isn't an atom that's unchangeable, but all atoms are made up of electrons. And you know when I start talking about science, I'm over my head.

I don't know what I'm talking about. I get it from the Reader's Digest. And they're charitable to the ignorant like me.

Tell us lots of things we should never try to quote. Point being, that though this looks like wood, and it is wood, and it functions as wood, it's actually made up of little particles of electricity that are as far apart from each other as the sun is from the earth. And I don't know what I said.

I just know that's what they say it is. So, the things that you see are made of things that you can't see. And they're held together.

And he holds them together. And he said one day, Be! And he believed what he said. And so by faith, the things which are seen were made from that which was unseen.

Now, I think that's wonderful. I hope you understand more about it than I do. But the fact still is that it says have the faith of God.

So you've got to understand when you're talking about this verse that seems so little, the evidence of things not seen, that the office of faith is to bring to reality the things which aren't visible now. So look at some of the characteristics of faith for a moment. First, we can put it this way if you want.

Faith is the eye of the soul. Or if you wish, the eye of the mind. Or if you wish, the eye of the human spirit.

The conviction of things not seen. Faith is the organ by which we look at the invisible. We look at the eternal.

Now, the eye of the mind, the mind is doing the looking, and the eye doesn't see, you know. You know that. I see through the mind.

And I am not my eye. One day I'll leave my eye. Give it to somebody who can use it.

It's very useful. But right now, I use it. But I don't see with it.

I see with it, but it doesn't see. I see. I see.

And so faith is that eye of the human spirit. Faith is that by which we see what we can't see, which is unseen. Now, I have to use glasses.

The day I had a minor tragedy, I was having my glasses cleaned, and the nose piece came off, and then the lens came out, so I had to run back and get another pair. And the Bible is the eyeglass through which faith looks. The Bible is the magnifying glass.

My, George, you better learn to use the Bible. Because if you don't, you're going to have trouble. You try to use faith without having the Word of God, you're going to get every kind of distortion and misrepresentation and everything in the world that could possibly confuse and perplex.

You see, faith comes by hearing, hearing the Word. And unless you have learned how to use the Word of God, you can have faith, but your faith is not going to be that which will be good for you or glorify God. That was interesting.

One place it says, God gave them the desires of their heart, and He sent leanness to their souls. You know, it's absolutely possible that you can get the things you believe for, but it doesn't necessarily mean you're going to be happy with them. Like the little fellow that was out hunting mountain lions with his friend, and they wounded the mountain lion that was up in the top of a tree, and so he says, I'll go up and get him and shake him loose.

And he climbed the tree and he got up there and he said, Tom, come on up here and help me hold him. And then there was a snarling and a hissing and a lot of rackets and ouching. He said, no, Tom, come on up and help me let go of him.

And I've had a lot of people that have asked me to help them let go of things they thought they wanted. And they got them. And they just couldn't wait to get help to let go of them.

Because when they got them, it wasn't what they really wanted. So there's a danger. You see, you've got to have eyeglasses if you don't have 20-20 vision.

None of us do as far as spiritual things are concerned. So we need the Word of God. We need to be able to see everything through the Scripture.

And anything in the Scripture that anything that we would want, that is contrary to the Scripture, we just better not monkey around with. Don't ask for it. And anything in the Scripture that doesn't have God's quickening to your heart, you better leave it alone.

Walk around the bear trap four times before you step in it. In other words, just because you've got the key of faith and you can unlock the storehouse of God's answered prayer, and I don't think you can, but just if you could, it would pay you to be awful careful. Be awful careful what you ask for.

You better get acquainted with the Word, because it's through the Word that your heart receives that liberty and that freedom and that delight and that joy and that expectancy, and faith comes by hearing the Word and how important it is to test the things that we're seeing that aren't there and we want, hope for, that we want to make sure we really want. How important it is we test it by the Word. Now, faith is not only the eye of the soul, but faith is the hands of the soul.

It's the hands of the soul. It's the means by which we reach out to take all the things good and promised and future, and it's by faith, therefore, that we reach for them. And we need to realize that those things which are good and promised and that we expect we do so on unfailing ground, all the things God's promised in His Word, all of our needs He's promised that He'll supply, all things that are promised for the

future, everything necessary for us to be all that He wants us to be.

Oh, there are so many things that our hands can reach out to take. Now, for a moment, just look at what faith, the implications of faith, what it isn't, what faith is not, and it's important. Faith is not, and it cannot be, a phenomenon of the intellect.

You know that triangle? Every time you come to the Word of God, you need that triangle. You remember it? Three-sided equilateral triangle. Up this side, the left hand, as you face it, the mental aspect.

And down this side, the emotional aspect. And across the bottom, the volitional aspect. You don't have faith because with your mind you read a promise and you agree that the promise is true.

You can't have faith on the intellectual level. Only an intellectual state is involuntary, it's passive, and there is no virtue in association with involuntary states of the mind. Faith is a condition of salvation, something we are commanded to do on the pain of death if we don't believe.

Now, it's a virtue, and therefore, faith cannot be just an intellectual state of mind. Faith is a duty, a responsibility, and that makes it far more than a state of mind. That doesn't mean there isn't an intellectual aspect to it.

That's why I said the Bible is the eye, or the glasses, the magnifying glass of faith. There's an intellectual aspect, but it's not a state of mind. It's not an intellectual state.

Now, number two. The implications include this, that faith is not a feeling. Why? Feelings are phenomena of the emotions and are passive states of mind and have no moral character.

The fact that you feel happy means nothing, or that you feel sad means nothing. It could be caused by indigestion. It could be caused by low or high atmospheric pressure.

I have found sometimes in years gone by in preaching that the congregation would either be exhilarated or quiet depending on whether the barometer stood at 29.2 or 30.7, you know, depending on the barometer made a difference in the response to the message. This involuntary state of mind. Feelings, therefore, are not to be equated with faith.

Faith in God is a cardinal virtue, and it's the means, and it's the mainspring of a holy life. So it cannot consist in any involuntary state or exercise of the mind or of the emotions. What it is, faith is an exercise of the will.

It's an exercise of the will. It is that purpose fixed, formed, and executed to believe God as an intellectual aspect, as an emotional aspect, but it becomes faith with the exercise of the will. And how many times people are looking for a feeling and saying, Oh, I just don't have, I just don't feel, so I have faith.

You don't trust your feelings. You're very unreliable. You trust the word.

I think I've told you if I haven't, I shall not, I'll make it up right now. But George Mueller was asked to speak in Canada, and he set a meeting for him in Montreal, and he came by ship. Back in the days when the ships were a combination of sails and side wheelers, they got to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, and there was a fog that settled in.

And the captain said, Brother Mueller, I'm sorry that I have to tell you this, but sometimes this fog has hung on this mouth of the river for as much as two weeks, and we've just had to stay anchored here. Well, I'm sorry, brother, but we can't do that. You see, I'm scheduled to speak in Montreal, and I prayed about speaking there, and I believe God wants me there.

Well, I'm sorry, we just have to wait for the fog to lift. Well, don't you believe that God controls all things? Well, yes, yes, I do. Well, Captain, let us go to your cabin and have prayer and ask God to lift the fog.

So Captain and George Mueller went down, and George Mueller said, I'll pray, and he prayed. Just a simple childlike prayer based on the word of God, based on his confidence in God, based on the experience he'd had with God. And he not only asked God to lift the fog, but he thanked him for lifting the fog and getting him to Montreal on time.

And when he finished, Captain hemmed and hawed, trying to get himself primed up to pray, and Mueller said, Oh, Captain, I don't think we have time for you to pray. You see, the fog has started to lift, and we should get underway. Oh, oh, oh, oh, he went on deck, and sure enough, the fog had started to lift, and within minutes they were slowly underway toward Montreal.

You see, George Mueller understood that faith is not a feeling, and faith is not just an intellectual idea, but faith is an exercise of the will, and he dared to become a man of faith. We all admired George Mueller, but he failed to imitate him and follow his teaching. Oh, may God teach me and you together, as we go into the Word, and as we read and study Hebrews 11, to become men and women of faith.

I've told you in the past there are four kinds of faith. There's a head faith in intellectual sin. There's a dead faith in appropriation.

There's a devil's faith in emotional response. And then there's heart faith, with the heart, with the will, and belief. And I trust this morning that everyone here has exercised that saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, we thank Thee and we praise Thee that Thou hast given to us this marvelous privilege, this marvelous opportunity, being men and women of faith, daring to believe Thee and daring to trust Thee. Oh, God of grace, teach me and teach us together what it is. We've sung it.

Oh, God, may we hear it. Faith, mighty faith, the promised seeds. It looks to God alone.

Laughs at impossibilities and cries. It shall, it shall be done. Laughs at impossibilities and cries.

It shall be done. For the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask Thee. Amen.

Lord, I'm really glad You're here. I hope You feel the same when You see all my fear and how I fail. I fall sometimes.

It's hard to walk in shifting sands. I miss the rock and find I've nowhere left to stand and start to cry. Lord, please help me.

Raise my hand so You can pick me up. Hold me close. Hold me tight.

Oh, I have found a place where I can hide. It's safe inside Your arms of mine. Like a child who's had throughout a storm.

You keep me warm in Your arms of mine. Storms will come and storms will go. I wonder just how many storms it takes until I finally know.

You're here always, even when my skies are far from gray. I can stay. Teach me to stay there.

In the place I found where I can hide Your arms of mine. Like a child who's had throughout a storm. You keep me warm in Your arms of mine.

Lord, I'm really glad You're here.

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