

Thirty-three years ago, I preached a message to my college ministry group about having “A Faith for All Seasons”. I found my notes from that message earlier this year and started to ponder what my next sermon would be. This led me to do a series based on 1 Corinthians 13:13:

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

We will be doing a deep dive into God’s Word, over the course of the next three weeks, as we learn more about:

1. **Faith,**
2. **Hope, and**
3. **Love**

DEFINITIONS

Webster’s definition of faith reads:

Allegiance to duty or to a person; loyalty; fidelity to one’s promises; sincerity of intentions; belief and trust in and loyalty to God; belief in the traditional doctrines of a religion; firm belief in something for which there is no proof; complete trust; something that is believed especially with strong conviction.

A biblical definition of faith would be belief and trust in God, knowing that God is real even if we cannot see Him.

2 Corinthians 5:7 reads:

for we walk by faith, not by sight.

And Hebrews 11:1 reads:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Let's look at this same verse in the Amplified Bible:

Now faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality—faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses].

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Amen? AMEN!

Now let's look at some key words related to faith:

1. Certain: fixed, settled; proved to be true; of a specific or unspecified character; dependable; reliable; indisputable; undeniable; assured in mind or action
2. Doubt: uncertainty of belief or opinion; the condition of being uncertain; distrust; an inclination to not believe or accept

I don't know about you, but I would prefer to be certain than live in doubt. I prefer placing my faith in God than in something uncertain. Because while I may not see God, because of how He has provided for me, and watches over me, I know He is true, and His Word is true. Of this I am certain.

But what exactly is biblical faith? Faith can be something communal but also very personal to everyone.

Last month Marcella celebrated 32 years of being married and in those years, we have moved almost 20 times. The first major move from NJ to IL would not only takes us away from family and friends but also the church we both were saved and married at. We took a list of other churches in the area we were moving to so that we could find the right one God wanted us to land at. Everyone we visited for a few weeks happened to do sermons about faith and many would talk about Abraham being told to move from the land he knew to where God was sending him and that was extremely personal for us in that time of our married life.

Our first major move occurred in January 1996 after Marcella had graduated from college, started her new job for the Port Authority of NY/NJ. Why would we move after landing such a nice job? Well, shortly after starting, they announced their first ever layoffs. They laid off indiscriminately across the board, but she unfortunately was one of the members to be laid off. She worked for six weeks and was given severance pay of six weeks. So here she was after graduating and landing a nice project management entry level job being unemployed. One might have argued with God on why He would let this happen. The truth is that we would not know until six years later, on that fateful tragic day of 9/11. Had she not been laid off; most likely I would be a widower today. God knows all things, and knows what is best for our lives, even if we cannot see it yet. I have faith in this!

Let's start with what faith is not as far as the Bible is concerned:

Faith is not religious heritage. As Steve shared last week from the miracle of the healing of the blind man, the Pharisees had more faith in religious heritage of their training and upbringing, but this was a hollow faith. Just because your father had faith, or your grandfather was a preacher does not make you someone of faith.

Faith is not indoctrination. Knowledge on its own is not faith. We read in Romans 9:30-32:

³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,

While indoctrination can lead to faith, in of itself, it is not what provides righteousness.

Faith is not comfort. People are often comfortable in their sinful lives and struggle to come to a saving faith in Christ because they are so happy and comfortable in their sin. Traditions also become comfortable, but being a traditionalist is not a path to righteousness.

Faith is not self-righteousness. Again, looking at the Pharisees from the Romans 9 verses we just read, we can see that they thought that their works could save them, and they placed their faith in that. This was misplaced faith because we are not saved by works.

So, what does the Bible say faith is:

Faith is comprised of specific knowledge and information given to us by God through His Son and Word. Romans 10:17 reads:

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

The Bible refers to faith both objectively and subjectively.

The objective faith is the body of knowledge about Jesus and the good news in the Bible. This can be referred to as THE faith. To expand on this, we see in Ephesians 4:4-6:

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Finally, in Jude 3 we also are told of THE faith:

³ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

As a subjective experience we see that in Galatians 3:22-23 Paul writes:

²² But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

Verse 23 shows the objective sense of THE faith. You cannot have faith, until you receive THE faith.

Faith is an act of the will. Our will must respond in two ways for faith to emerge from the words of Christ. First, we must accept the information as being true. This is belief. Believing is accepted something to be true.

Hebrews 11:6 reads:

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.

Then we must act upon this information given to us. Faith is born when we believe the words of Christ and act upon them. As Acts 8:26-38 we are told of the story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch who was searching for the truth in God's Word.

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. ²⁷ And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." ³⁰ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip

to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opens not his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴ And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” ³⁷ *And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”* ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

The eunuch only had the scriptures to read but he needed to accept the Word to be true and then he had to act of that belief, which in this case, that action was proclaiming Christ to be the Messiah and to be baptized. This produced faith in his life.

In Acts 2:37-38 we are told:

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter had preached THE faith and they accepted what he had preached to be true, and they wanted to know what action they needed to take. “Repent and be baptized” was Peter’s response.

Therefore, faith is produced when we exercise our will through belief and obedience in accordance with the Words of Christ. Faith is what gives obedience quality.

Thirdly, faith is a feeling. Ooooooh, that may make some cringe inside. We sang Blessed Assurance earlier this morning. Let’s look again at Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Faith is not only a head thing (knowledge) but also a heart thing (feeling). I am confident that Christ will come again and take His church home to heaven.

One of my favorite books in the Bible is the Epistle to the Philippians. Select verses from Chapter 3 in that letter reads:

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith — ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Straining Toward the Goal

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

C.S. Lewis wrote:

“In the fellowship of His suffering, I’m getting to know Christ more intimately as the Saviour, the Consoler of the suffering, the Helper of the helpless, the Deliverer of the captives, the Binder of the brokenhearted, the giver of rest to the weary, the Lifter-up of the downtrodden and the releaser of the oppressed. Christ is absolutely and infinitely faithful, merciful, gracious, loving and always in control.”

Paul is confident of what he is writing to the church in Philippi. He states that he has forgotten what lies in his past, good and bad, and presses on towards the prize of Heaven! Oh, that we may be able to say the same every day.

Earlier in this epistle to the Philippians he shares in Chapter 1 verses 22 through 26:

²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of

this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Another feeling is shared here: Joy. Faith will bring emotions to us just as it teaches us and informs of wisdom in God and his Word. It will produce confidence, perseverance, and as we will see next week: Hope.

EXAMPLES OF FAITH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In Genesis 15:6 we read about Abraham (*while he was still named Abram*):

And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

And in Deuteronomy 8:2 we read how Moses told the nation of Israel:

And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

And finally in Habakkuk 2:4 we read:

“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.

EXAMPLES OF FAITH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In Romans 1:17 Paul refers to this verse in Habakkuk:

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

In Romans 4:3 Paul refers to the Genesis passage about Abraham:

For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

And no study into faith is complete without looking at the chapter of faith from the book of Hebrews, Chapter 11. Here are some select verses:

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ 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.

⁶ 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.

In Matthew 17:14-21 we read about the healing of a boy from demon possession:

¹⁴ And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, ¹⁵ said, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶ And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.” ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁰ He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”

In Luke 7:1-10 we read about the faith of a centurion:

7 After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. **2** Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. **3** When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. **4** And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, **5** for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue." **6** And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. **7** Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed." **8** For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." **9** When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." **10** And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

In John 20:29 we read about Jesus' response to the doubting Thomas:

29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Romans 3:21-22 reads:

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— **22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

Ephesians 6:16 states:

16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

1 Timothy 6:12 says:

¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Finally, Hebrews 12:2 reads:

² 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.

My hope and prayer are that this message has strengthen your faith if you are a believer. But if you have not come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, know this: He is the Son of God who died on the cross for all our sins so that you could accept his call and become part of the family of God. Here at Pursuit, we look for all to belong, believe and become. To belong to the fellowship, believe in Jesus and his good news, so that after being saved, we become more like him as we are transformed and sanctified in our faith.

If you need to make a profession of faith, please come to me and John after the service is over so we can rejoice with you and guide you in your next few steps of faith.

Let's pray.