

St. Matthew AME Church
Orange, New Jersey
Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor/Teacher

Women's Bible Study
Saturday, April 12, 2025

Spring Series: "A Living Faith"

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1

Session II: "Walk It, Don't Just Talk It"

"But someone will say," You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." James 2:18 NKJV

I. Review of Spring Series Scripture

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1

- Two words describe faith: sure and certain. These two qualities need a secure beginning and ending point. The beginning point of faith is believing in God's character. He is who He says He is: good, compassionate, loving, just, gracious, kind, faithful, forgiving, holy, wise, patient, merciful, self-sufficient, sovereign, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent.
- The ending point is believing in God's promises. He will do what He says He will do. He will give us peace, protection, provision, power, presence, and purpose.
- When we believe that God will fulfill His promises even though we don't see those promises materializing yet, we demonstrate true faith.
- Hebrews 11:1-2, The writer of Hebrews defines faith as the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. To exercise faith is to have confidence about an expectation without visible proof that it will happen. What makes confidence possible is the trustworthiness of the object of faith. Faith is saying God is telling the truth. Faith is saying I trust Him.

II. Three Aspects of Faith

In the Bible, faith has the following three aspects:

1. **Perception (The Mind)** A person cannot have saving faith unless the mind embraces the content of the gospel. People must accept the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as fact and then understand the personal implications of these events in their lives. Faith is only as valid as the truthfulness of its object.
2. **Persuasion (The Emotions)** Although people may be under persuasion at the same time that they receive knowledge, many know the gospel, but do not accept the gospel! Faith is a real conviction based upon the revelation of God.

“So, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Romans 10:17

3. **Volition (The Will)** in this aspect, a person’s will responds with a personal commitment to and complete acceptance of Christ as the only hope for eternal salvation. Faith consists of someone embracing all of Christ with their whole being.

- Real faith does not bypass the mind and the emotions. In a similar way, intellectual understanding or warm feelings do not qualify as biblical faith if they do not lead to trust and action. Faith does; faith works.

III. What is the Difference?

- The two words: faith and belief are often used interchangeably, but there is a significant difference. Believing that God exists is only the beginning, even the demons believe that much.

“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder.” James 2:19

- Belief refers to an intellectual acceptance of something as true while faith involves a deeper trust and commitment even in the absence of proof that can lead to action.
- Faith means relying completely on who God is and what He has done. Faith is confidence in God, complete trust in God.
- Belief can change based on new information or experiences. Belief can be based on facts, observation, or reasoning (Believing that the earth is round based on scientific information).
- Faith involves reliance and trust, even when there is no concrete proof. Faith can endure in the face of doubt or uncertainty.

IV. Review of Session I:” We Are Not the First.”

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Hebrews 12:1

“This is what the ancients were commended for.” Hebrews 11:2

- Hebrews 11 is home of the “Hall of Faith.” The champions of the Old Testament are recognized for their achievements as they followed God by faith. Success for them didn’t bypass suffering. Instead, they trusted God and ran the race to the end. To encourage us to keep going, the authors of Hebrews remind us that we’re not the first to travel the faith road.

- In the following “Hall of Faith,” the author uses a repeated structure: the name of an Old Testament believer is given, explains what he or she did, and uses the expression “by faith” to connect that person’s actions with a belief system.
- “A Living Faith” makes a difference. Our faith should be more than a statement. It should also result in action.

V. Session II: “Walk It, Don’t Just Talk It”

“But someone will say, You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith without works and I will show you my faith by my works.” James 2:18 NIV

- In the Hall of Faith of Hebrews 11, the author repeatedly describes what various Old Testament figures accomplished “by faith.” Their faith was demonstrated by what they did.

“Wasn’t Abraham our father justified by works in offering Isaac his son on the altar. You see that faith was active together with his works, and by works, faith was made complete, and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” James 2:21-24

- Offering Isaac...on the altar didn’t save Abraham; after all, he had already believed God and had his faith credited as righteousness. (James 2:23)
- It is in Genesis 22 that God called Abraham to sacrifice his son. When Abraham obeyed, God confirmed His intent to bless him and make him a great nation of him.
- By works, (his) faith was made complete or matured. (James 2:22) Faith must be demonstrated, not just discussed, A person is justified by faith alone apart from works for heaven but is justified by works for usefulness on earth.

VI. “Make it Plain”

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters if someone claims to have faith, but does not have works? Can such faith save him? James 2:14

- James wants us to know that it’s possible for a believer to have a useless faith—one that’s devoid of good works. Some people think that James is contradicting Paul, who said, “A person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Romans 3:28). But Paul is talking about how a sinner becomes a saint, whereas James is talking about how a saint brings heaven to earth. You cannot merit salvation; it is received by grace through faith in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) Our sanctification, however, requires that our faith expresses itself in works.
- The New Testament clearly says that we are saved” by grace ...through faith” and that[salvation] is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast”(Ephesians 2:8-9). Yet the apostle Paul’s very next words are that “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works”(Ephesians 2:10). So we are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works.

- Verbal Faith-faith that consists of words without actions-is insufficient. It cannot serve or survive. But everyone profits when the love of God abides in the believer and is expressed through good works.

“If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed, “but you don’t give them what the body needs, what good is it?”

James 2:15-16

- James isn’t deriding the spiritual; he’s simply insisting that it’s not enough. If a brother is hungry, he doesn’t need a sermon. He needs something to eat.! Put your faith in action by helping those in need.

“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” I John 3:17-18

- Faith and good works are so interconnected that James conclude: If we say we have been saved by faith, but have no good works that show our faith, we do not differ from the person who neither claims to have faith nor does good works.
- This relationship between faith and works is the focus of James’ letter. He suggests that faith and works are dual sides of the same coin of salvation, that faith and works are not mutually exclusive, and that true inner faith manifests good works.

“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.’ James 2:26

THE FAITH OF A BELIEVER CAN PETER OUT, DWINDLE OR DECLINE.WE CAN BECOME RELIGIOUS CORPSES UNLESS OUR FAITH IS PUT TO WORK.