

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

Women's Bible Study

Saturday, May 10, 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 III: "I Trust in God"

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6

I. Review of Series Scripture and Session I

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

Hebrews 11:1

- There is no clearer explanation of faith in all Scripture than the one found in Hebrews 11:1. The two key words here are sure and certain. Faith is about sure and certain of something.
- This raises the question at the heart of the confusion often surrounding the topic of faith: Sure, and certain about what? When can we be sure and certain God is going to act? When can we know for sure He is going to do what we ask?
- Fortunately, the author (whose identity is unknown) introduces his explanation in this way: "This is what the ancients were commended for." Hebrews 11:2 This refers to faith. The people whose stories he recounted were all men and women who had faith; they were sure and certain about something. They were sure and certain about the right things.
- As the author recites the experiences of some of our favorite Bible characters, along with some of the most spectacular events recorded in Scripture, it becomes evident why the ancient men and women were so sure and certain. Furthermore, the author gives us some unmistakable clues about the things we can be sure and certain about.
- The author begins with the creation story and moves right on through the story of Abraham. He takes us on a historical journey through the life of Moses, including the parting of the Red Sea. He mentions others. Each person's life is associated 'by faith.'

II. “Because of God’s Promises”

*Something very important is associated with the Biblical characters in Hebrews 11:2. In some cases, it is stated outright. In others, it is merely implied. That something else is a promise! The men and women were so certain and sure because each had received a promise from God. They were confident that God would do exactly what he promised. **AND THAT IS THE ESSENCE OF FAITH.**

* The term promise, or some derivative, appears eighteen times in Hebrews. It appears seven times in this one chapter alone. What is the significance of that? Faith and the promise of God go hand in hand.

* Where there is no promise, there can be no faith-only hope.

*Notice the connection in the following verse: “By faith Abraham, even though he was past age-and Sarah herself was barren-was enabled to become a father because he considered Him faithful who had made the promise” (v.11). The basis of Abraham’s faith was the promise of God. He believed he and Sarah would have a child in their old age because God promised they would. Their faith followed a promise. Every person mentioned in this chapter was given a promise of some kind. Faith was grounded in the promise of God.

*Faith, then is confidence in the promise of God, or as stated earlier, confidence that God will do what He has promised.

III. “There is a Difference”

*The two words: faith and belief are often used interchangeably, but there is a significant difference. Believing that God exist is just 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 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

*Living faith makes a difference. Make sure your faith is more than just a statement-it should also result in action. We should always put our faith to work.

* James wants believers not only to hear the truth, but also to do it. He contrasts the empty faith (claims without conduct) with faith that works. In order to have a lively faith you have to connect your faith to works.

* Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

* 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 James and Paul aren’t speaking about the same thing. Paul is talking about how a sinner becomes a saint. 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. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

* James is perhaps best known for his desire to balance faith and works. Although his emphasis is distinct and pointed, everything he says is consistent with Paul’s teaching that we are saved not by works, but for works. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

* James gives strong pastoral counsel to a flock scattered throughout the Roman world by persecution: beliefs must translate into life. It is not enough to tuck away a private, intellectual faith in order to blend in with everyone else. If our faith in Christ means anything, we will stand out. People will notice a difference.

V. “What is the Confusion?”

* To apply our faith is to live as if God will keep His promises. God is who He says He is and if we really believe the Bible, is His Word. That is what living by faith is all about-taking God at His Word.

* Living by faith requires that we become familiar with God’s promises to us. The Bible is filled with promises for believers. Nothing is more encouraging or nurturing to our faith than reviewing God’s promises.

* Many Christians who are disappointed with God feel as if God has let them down, as if He didn’t answer their requests as they desired. It is not unusual for people in this situation to stop reading their Bibles, stop attending church, and stop praying. In some cases, their disappointment turns to anger and even bitterness.

* Disappointment with God usually stems from confusion over the meaning of faith. Most people who are disappointed with God misunderstands what faith is. To them faith is some sort of power or force. They think that if they have enough faith, God will do whatever they ask Him. So when a crisis comes along, they try to move God into action through their faith. When God doesn’t respond, they become disappointed. Their misunderstandings lead to unrealistic expectations. And their expectations eventually lead to disappointment.

* Faith is confidence God will do what He has promised. That is what all those men and women in Hebrews 11 were commended for.

* Part of the problem is that the concepts of faith and hope have been confused. As children of God, we are free to ask God for anything we please. And once we ask, we can hope He will give us exactly what we asked for.

*Some really don't want God to function as the Lord of their lives; they would rather have God operate like a vending machine. They put in a little faith, and He sends out whatever we think we need. But God doesn't operate that way. And to approach the Christian life as if he does is to set yourself up for disappointment. Faith is not an escape hatch from all the trials and tribulations in life. It is confident that God will keep His promises during this difficult time.

VI. "I Trust in God"

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6NKJV

- Chapter 3 contains one of the most beloved, quoted, and memorized passages in the Bible. It's a reminder that the knowledge of who God is should make us willing to trust Him. Solomon says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding in all your ways know Him(acknowledge) and He will make your paths straight.
- The Hebrew word for trust means to lie down on-to put your entire weight on something. When you go to sleep at night, you lie down on your bed because you believe it is strong enough to hold you up,
- "With all your heart" means entirely, without exception. So, in essence God says, "Trust me completely; I can sustain you." Your own understanding won't support you.
- God doesn't want us coming to crucial crossroads in our lives with nothing to guide us. He wants us to know His ways, His divine perspective so we don't take the wrong road.
- When things aren't going our way, it is hard to look beyond the here and now; it is hard to remember the goodness of the Lord; we forget the significance of the sacrifice made for us at Calvary. Sometimes our faith runs low; we begin to doubt.
- The proof that we're not trusting God-even when we say we do-is when we turn to other sources first to address life's problems.
- If you want to know where your trust is, ask yourself, "Where do I turn first when I need help?"
- God is omniscient and His wisdom is infinite. He has the ability to solidify and coordinate the events of history throughout eternity.
- When you trust in God in all you do, "He will make your paths straight. Life is crooked. It doesn't take long to figure that out. But God can remove the obstacles and cut a path through the woods.
- When you are walking in the will of God, your life will head in a straight line, no matter how the road of life curves. God knows the end from the beginning, the start from the finish. He knows where you need to be, how you are supposed to get there, and what route you should take. God wants you to trust Him, so you can really start living.
- Faith is the cornerstone of living a meaningful life, enabling us to trust in God's promises, even when things seem uncertain.

- It is a way of living that involves believing in what we cannot see, trusting in His character and acting on His Word(promises), even when it is difficult.

“I TRUST IN GOD”