
Sermon Notes

June 25, 2017

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

What Faith Is Hebrews 11:1-7

Chapter 11

- ❖ Hebrews 11 is undoubtedly the most well-known chapter in the book of Hebrews
 - an amazing catalogue of Israel's most well-known and most venerated leaders and heroes
 - rather than collapse under all sorts of challenges and external pressures, by God's grace, these people stood strong, persevered and came through
- ❖ A powerful reminder that these OT servants of God were not saved by the Law or by the OT sacrificial system
 - they were not saved by works or on the basis of anything they did
 - they lived and were saved by faith

Faith

- ❖ The theme of faith connects with the final few verses of chapter 10
 - 10:38, quotation from Habakkuk *The just shall live by faith*

- faith is the way to life
- faith is the way to live
- ❖ For those who lived before Jesus came, faith was in the future fulfillment of God's long-standing promise that He would send a Savior
 - God promised He would deal with sin
 - God promised to provide the means of restoring our broken relationship with Him
- ❖ A "working definition" of faith
 - *assurance of things hoped for*
 - *conviction of things not seen*
 - this definition does not address where faith comes from
 - this definition talks about the way faith shows up and acts itself out in real life
 - faith is not just a matter of belief, it is a matter of behavior
- ❖ *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" (Jn. 20:29)
- ❖ As counterintuitive as it seems, putting our faith in Christ is more durable and more dependable than anything we will ever experience with our senses
- ❖ We all live by faith (in something!)
 - spiritual faith accepts and acts on things which we may not understand
 - spiritual faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)

Getting God's "Seal of Approval"

- ❖ By faith *the people of old received their commendation* (v. 2)
- ❖ *Without faith it is impossible to please God* (v. 6)
 - *whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him* (v. 6)
 - things done without faith cannot, do not, will not receive God's approval
- ❖ The Enlightenment, Rationalism, and Relativism
 - a trajectory that has led further and further away from a world view rooted in faith
 - over the past 2 centuries, rationalism has given way to relativism which puts truth on a sliding scale
 - the world view of the original readers of *Hebrews* (v. 3)
- ❖ The Lord sees, accepts, and approves of faith

Leading the Parade

- ❖ Leading the parade in this long list of legendary saints are Abel and Enoch
 - Abel shows us how faith leads to acceptable worship
 - Enoch had faith in a personal, loving, gracious God
- ❖ Both testaments are filled with multiple promises that those who seek God will find Him

- *I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.* (Prov. 8:17)
- *You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.* (Jer. 29:13)
- *For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.* (Luke 11:10)
- *Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* (Matt. 6:33)

Personal Application

1. Look at the "working definition" of faith that is given in Hebrews 11:1. Using this definition as a "measuring tool" how do you assess the quality of your faith? Do you have the kind of assurance and conviction that are mentioned here?
2. Verse 6 tells us that "God's seal of approval" today is no different than it was in OT times. Does your faith fit the description given here? How does the promise of v. 6 connect with Jesus' promise in John 3:16 that whoever believes in Jesus *should not perish but have eternal life*?
3. Would you describe yourself as someone who seeks after God? If you answer "yes", think about and praise God for some of the rewards that God has already blessed you with as a result. If you answer "no", think about the Scripture promises printed above and consider what it is that is holding you back from embracing these wonderful blessings and benefits.