

The Impossible Faith  
Hebrews 11:1-7

Ephesians 2:1-10  
Matthew 10:16-33  
Responsive Psalm 84

Today we are going to be starting out in chapter 11 in the book of Hebrews. As we go through this chapter we will see that the Author here has composed a list of people he commends for their faith. We can see that the Author is in a way encapsulating what he has been teaching up to this moment. He has pointed to the fact that everything which came before served the purpose to point to the Messiah, to Christ who has come, and who died on the cross for the sins of his people.

So let us start this morning by reading starting in verse 1, and we will be going to verse 7 this morning. Before we start diving in to these verses today we must remember where the Author left off last week as well, If you remember he was talking about enduring tribulations, and even so yet still showing love and compassion toward one another. In fact he hints that even showing love and compassion put them into tribulation because of their associations, and yet they still did not waver, and he says that they joyfully accepted the plundering of their goods.

The loss of their own personal wealth was of little importance to them because they knew that they had a better and ever lasting possession in heaven. But where did this seeming unnatural joy and peace come from? For who would rejoice in tribulation? Who would rejoice in the plundering of their goods?

The Author answers this question in verse 39, pointing to these Hebrews, or group of Hebrews that he is writing to. After reminding them of their former days of great struggle and persecution as he puts it, he tells them, “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” This is not the first time that he has associated himself with them, as we have gone through this book we have seen a few times where he has likened himself to be a part of them

In chapter 3, he calls them Holy Brethren, and partakers of the heavenly calling. He is not witnessing to the lost, but rather he writes to instruct God's children to be wary of being lead astray by false teachers and idols, verse 12 of the same chapter he says, “Beware Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Again warning them, to test, to make sure that there are no wolves in sheeps clothing among them who would seek to lead them astray.

In Chapter 4, we see that the Author is aware that there are likely some among them who are indeed not brethren, but rather those of a false faith, for he says again, likening himself to them, “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering his rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us, as well as to them but the word which they heard did not profit them.....why did it not profit them? Well, he says in the next line, for it was not mixed with faith in those who heard it.

As we had been talking about in the last few weeks, not all of those who identify as Christians, really are Christians. The defining factor, the thing that separates a true Christian, and one who has empty claims, is faith. For as the Author just said here in chapter 4, these heard the gospel, they heard the word of God yet they fell short, they did not enter into his rest and it was unprofitable to them for they did not have faith.

Since we are here again talking about God's rest, and even though we went through this already, its been a few months and I just want to bring up this little reminder for our reformed brethren. I ask, in what context is he talking about when he mentions entering "His rest"? As we see there are those who do, and those who do not, and the deciding factor is faith. Now I ask....is this the Sabbath rest?

This is important for understanding this will dictate how we treat our Sundays, or if a Jew, Saturdays. For there is this idea, that from the commandment that we are to keep the Sabbath holy, that means that the day we gather to worship should be set apart, and different. Yet, what is the Author talking about here? Can not one still observe this sabbath and yet, not have faith? Can one who has the appearance of faith but not having the substance still attend services and uphold what the church deems a proper sabbath?

Yet the author here, talking to these body of Hebrews says that there are some that gather among them that will not enter this rest....so it must be something other then just a day of the week. And if you think my applying this mention of His rest, as the sabbath rest is wrong, well the Author does in the next verses. Verse 3, says, "For we who have believed enter into that rest." If this rest is only for those who believe, then it must be more then just maintaining a proper sabbath day.

He goes on in the following verses to say that on the seventh day, God rested from all his works, and then says They shall not enter my rest. Verse 6 says," Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience."

So as we see here, the sabbath rest has nothing to do with a certain day. Sunday is not the new testament version of the Jewish Saturday sabbath. To believe so, is to fall into the very same error that these Hebrews had fallen into...looking to the shadow and forsaking the substance. Not understanding and seeing the fulfillment of all of these things are in Christ himself, which is why the Author has written this letter and has gone piece by piece, one by one pointing to this very fact.

As we can see, the key to entering into the sabbath rest, is not the observance of a day, but rather it is a rest in the faith that we have been given by God, through Christ. Therefor Christ himself, is our sabbath, it is in him that we rest, it is in him that we find peace, and it is only through faith.

By faith, we are those who believe the saving of our souls. Which brings us to our passage today for as the Author here is pointing out, the reality is that faith, in Christ, is all. Salvation is by faith alone, in Christ alone and to prove this point he begins to list these examples of such faith. True faith, the faith that is not one of mere empty claims, but a living vibrant faith is as scripture puts it, a gift of God.

This faith is not one that man can just conjure up on his own, this faith is not as one pastor and said to me once, the same faith as switching a light switch and believing that the light will turn on. It is more then a mere belief, it has a substance and is sustained in Christ himself. As the French Theologian Jacques d'Etapes wrote, " From himself, man cannot have his faith; but he who is the fount and infinite source of faithfulness provides it and increases it. This is why the disciples frequently asked the Lord, Lord, increase our faith. Because reason does not attain to faith, but grace, which is superior to reason, provides it. What reason provides is more over, obscure and weak, whereas hat grace affords is clear and strong, and so the trusting man of faith commits himself to God, not to his own reason, to divine truth, not to the possibility of his own cleverness, and his position is spacious not narrow. He who is unwilling to leave behind the possibility of his own reason encloses himself in a dark and confining prison where the sun of grace does not shine and the life gaining faith is not found. Oh, divine faith, wonderful foundation of life, strong support of hope, anchor of devotion, and shining cord extended from heaven, seizing which we climb to him who is above and beyond all altitude!

This faith which is given by God to us is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen as verse 1 says. This faith defies reason, this faith is why one would be joyous in tribulation, and why one would be willing to lose what they have for the glory of God. This faith produces a wisdom that is beyond any reason, or knowledge that the world can offer. This faith is in fact impossible, but we worship the God of impossible things. By that I mean, in God all things are possible as he said when speaking of a rich man. It is impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, it is more likely that a camel would pass through the eye of a needle....but, with God, all things are possible.

Amen to that right? For that is all of us is it not? If it was not for God's grace and mercy toward us we would not be here today. Praise God for this impossible gift of faith, which defies reason, and gives us hope.

Looking at verse 3, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." So, why....why do we believe this? No one was there to witness this, there is no fact checkers to tell us whether this statement is true or not. Mankind has been trying to use Science and reason to explain it, but always fall short.

We believe this, for the simple fact that it is what God's word says, and why do we believe God's word? Well, goes back to what the Author said in verse 4, these truths are taught to everyone, but without faith they can not be believed. So how does one have faith? Well that question was answered in our reading this morning in Ephesians chapter 2. "For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" So who gets this gift of faith? It is those in whom God has chosen to give.

Ephesians 1 "Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Or in Romans 9, He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion, so then it is not of him who wills, nor of him to runs, but of God who shows mercy.

It is this very reason that he also spoke in parables, so that only those to whom it was given to hear could hear, and to all others it would be a stumbling block, for it defied their reason. God has chosen the base or simple things to confound and confuse the wise, because it is of faith, not of knowledge or reason.

This of course does not meant that knowledge and reason doesn't play a part, God is the God who created it, and it is Gods knowledge and reason given through the holy spirit to his children that is the true wisdom, knowledge and reason which operates through faith. What this means, is that mankind's knowledge and reason can not, and will not know God for it has been spoiled by the fall, it is tainted and controlled by sin and instead of seeking to prove God, he seeks to disprove, man's knowledge and reason at its very core despises God, therefore they see faith, and the wisdom of God as foolishness.

Our faith has substance, it has purpose and it has meaning. The Christian faith is not a blind faith for faith sake. We rest in the hopes, and in the promises of God himself. Our faith is bound in those promises, it is bound in God's word, it is bound in very person of our sovereign Lord and Savior.

As I have mentioned before this was one of the main points of the book of James, it is the subject, substance and purpose of faith. Faith without works is dead, because faith will show forth belief, faith will show forth works of faith and that is what this chapter here in Hebrews is about.

The examples we have in our text this morning in Abel, and Enoch both mention their faith and their reward because of the work done by their faith. Abel offered to God a pleasing sacrifice, and it says, "through which he obtained witness that he was righteous." The sacrifices offered was the fruit of his faith, it was the working out of his faith.

For Enoch it says here that he did not see death, he was raptured up into heaven, why? It says that he had a testimony, a witness, a ministry, a working out of his faith that pleased God. So my point here is that our faith, the faith of a true believer and follower of Christ is not like the faith we see mentioned in movies, or by prosperity gospel preachers...who tell you if you have not what you desired it is because you are lacking in faith.

No, this is not a true faith. The reality that the faith that those preachers are teaching is not focused on the substance of your faith, they are not truly focused on God's promises, but rather it focus on your work, and your ability. And here is the thing about that...the faith that you have....it was given you, this is not something that you worked up in yourself, this is not something that by the sheer strength of your will you decided to have one day.

The bible tells us that faith is a gift of God. IT is given to his children, it is given to us as hope, as a promise, not as a mean to gain what we desire. So, if we are lacking in what we desire, because we do not have enough faith, we are in a sense saying that God who gives us faith...has not given us enough, therefore we don't have what we desire because.. God has failed us?

Faith is so much more, it is so much deeper, and it is a tool that God uses to minister to us. For in rewarding our faithfulness with his promises he shows his mercy, his grace, and his love toward us. For he is faithful, and he is true and will never go back on his word.

I have actually been pondering this a lot myself this week, I have been thinking upon God's promises that he will never leave nor forsake us, and his promises to care, and to guide. The promises that he will guard and protect us. And it is these promises in which is the object of our faith. We are challenged on these things, sometimes more then others. Our faith is challenged, and we are tested as to whether or not we believe these promises.

Often times it can be hard when we are in the thick of it, these promises are not front and center of our thoughts as we are caught in the midsts of what ever it is that is prevailing over us. I am reminded of our missionaries as they were preparing to go to Texas for training, to seek God's will in all of this and the roadblocks and trials that seemed to pop up in every step, yet throughout it all God yet provided, and their faith shined through like a beacon and was quite apparent to us on the sidelines watching the process.

As I was thinking upon God and his promises toward us, in moments where my faith was faltering this week I was thinking upon God's eternal promises, he promises to deliver us ultimately, as in our hope rests in the fact that upon our death we will be brought into the very presence of our father, in heaven. Giving us hope in the face of death, giving us hope in an ultimate deliverance and redemption. But as I was thinking about this during this week the words of Jesus in the book of matthew came to mind, matthew 6, 25 " Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more then clothing?" Then he says, look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feeds them, are you not more value then they?"

God provides even for the birds, for an animal that perishes and is no more.. yet they serve his purpose, the are for his glory, and he cares for them and he provides for them. How much more so will he care and provide for us?

He continues on and says, “Why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, o you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? For after all these things the gentiles seek...and this is the part that has been the focus of my thought this week, For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

This is where our faith comes in, do we believe this? Do we trust him? God knows our needs, he knows our struggles, he knows our desires, do we believe that he will provide for us? Not only in the next life, but in this life also? Again, he is the substance of our faith, therefore we should not worry or fret about the things of this life but instead as he says in verse 33, of Matthew 6, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all of these things will be added to you.” Be faithful, seek God, pursue righteousness, and the sovereign God who sees in secret, will reward you openly.

In closing, verse 34 of Matthew, it is this faith in action, it is trusting in the loving father, the one who provides for the birds, and clothes the fields, he says, “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” If God provides for us today, he will tomorrow, and the next day, and will continue even into everlasting life.

God's grace, his love, and his provision never ends, and it never fails, and the faith that he has given us, enabling us to believe him rests in these promises.