

By Faith

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Date: 06 May 2018

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 0 0] Well, would you turn with me this morning to the New Testament and to the letter to the Hebrews and chapter 11.

Hebrews chapter 11. I don't have a page number for you. Hebrews just comes before James.

And it's after the letter of Philemon. Or Philemon. Hebrews chapter 11. And we're reading from the beginning.

Now faith is the assurance or the confidence of things hoped for. The conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old receive their commendation.

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.

[1 : 0 7] I want to begin this morning by asking the question. What is faith? What is faith?

The Bible, as we've just read. And many other places in the Bible. It emphasizes that the most important part of the Christian life is faith.

But what is faith? What does the Bible mean when it tells us that we need to have faith? What does a preacher mean when he says that you need to have faith in Jesus Christ?

Murdo, what do you mean when you're telling your congregation to have faith in Jesus Christ? Well what I'm telling you to do when I'm telling you that you need to believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

I'm not telling you to follow a certain number of rules in order to be saved. What I'm saying and what I'm asking you to do is to trust in Jesus Christ.

[2 : 0 8] So we're going to ask the question today, what is faith? Verse 6 reminds us, we'll come to that in a few weeks time. Verse 6 reminds us that without faith it's impossible to please God.

And that's because a sinner can only be made righteous by their faith in Jesus Christ. And time and time again the Bible and the preachers and myself, I'm sure I've said it to you many a time, we stress the need to have faith.

That's how Jesus began his ministry. He began with the words, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent and believe. Have faith in the gospel. The most well known verse in the Bible, John 3.16, it says, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes or has faith in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The apostle Paul, he said to the Philippian jailer, a man who had never heard the gospel in his life. And yet the Philippian jailer, he was asking, what must I do to be saved? And Paul said to him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

Paul reminded the people living in Rome, that if you believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord and confess with your mouth that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved.

[3 : 28] Paul said to the Corinthians, we walk by faith and not by sight. Paul said to the Ephesians, you're saved by grace through faith. He said to the Galatians, the righteous shall live by faith.

But what does all this mean? What is faith? What am I asking you to do when you come to church? What am I asking you to do when I say to you that you must believe in Jesus Christ?

What does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ? And you know, that's the whole point of Hebrews chapter 11. It's all about answering that question.

What does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ? And this morning we're beginning a study on this well-known chapter. Because this chapter explains to us what it means to have faith in Jesus Christ.

And over the coming weeks and months, we'll consider biblical examples of those who lived and died by faith. And as we will see, each and every one of them, each and every one of these people mentioned in this chapter, they teach us what it means to have faith in Jesus Christ.

[4 : 44] But as an introduction to this chapter and this study of Hebrews 11, I just want us to ask the simple question. What does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ?

Is that not why you're here this morning? You want to know what it means to have faith in Jesus Christ. And I want to answer that question by just using three words.

Confidence, conviction, and commitment. Confidence, conviction, and commitment. So what does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ? First of all, confidence.

Confidence. Look again at verse 1 of Hebrews 11. It says, Now faith is the assurance or the confidence of things hoped for. The conviction of things not seen.

So Hebrews 11, it's all about answering the question. What does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ? But the reason that question was being asked at all was because the Hebrews, they were struggling in their faith.

[5 : 48] The Hebrews, they were Jewish converts to Christianity. And the reason they were struggling in their faith was because they were being persecuted for their faith. Many of them had had their homes burned, their property stolen.

They had received insults. They were imprisoned. They had received physical abuse. All because they were Christians. They had been converted from their ingrained religion of Judaism with all its laws and rules and regulations.

And the result was that when they converted to Christianity, they became outcasts in their own society. They were hated by their own people. And because there was this constant strain upon them to turn back to their old ways, many of the Hebrews, they were actually becoming very weary and losing heart.

But this struggle of persecution, it caused many of the Hebrews to drop out of their fellowship meetings. Others weren't going on to maturity. And lots of them, they were just giving up altogether.

But this letter that was written, it was written to encourage these discouraged Christians who were at the point of giving up. But you know, what does the writer do to encourage discouraged Christians?

[7 : 03] Well, what does anyone do in that situation? But point them to Jesus. And that's what the writer did. He reminded them that when it comes to all the Old Testament types and shadows that they've left behind, he tells them that Jesus is better.

Jesus is better. And if you read through this letter, and I'd encourage you to read it, what you'll see is that time and time again, the writer says Jesus is better than the prophets. He's better than the angels.

He's better than Moses. He provides a better Sabbath. Jesus is a better high priest than Aaron. He provides a better covenant. He gives to us a better sanctuary for worship.

He provided a better sacrifice than all the blood of bulls and of goats. And all the time he's saying Jesus is better. But then to top it all, he says that Jesus is a better example than all those who died in the Old Testament by faith.

Because he says just before we reach the climax of this letter, which is at the beginning of chapter 12, the writer gives us this list that we have here in chapter 11. And it's this list of women and men in the Old Testament who lived by faith.

[8 : 16] He says by faith, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, David. And he says they all walked by faith and they all died in faith.

And what the writer to the Hebrews is reminding us is that all these people lived their lives looking to Jesus because they knew that Jesus, the Messiah, is better.

And after the writer to the Hebrews, after he has spoken about all these people of faith, he then says at the beginning of chapter 12, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely to us.

And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and the finisher of what? Our faith.

It's wonderful. It's a wonderful letter of encouragement. He says, look to Jesus because he is the author and the finisher of our faith.

[9 : 23] And you know, this is why we need to be asking, what does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ? And he says in verse 1, now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, or the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

The word now, you see at the very beginning of verse 1, it's used in order to connect with what was said in the previous chapter in chapter 10.

Where the writer to the Hebrews, he's giving, as we've said, this call to persevere, to keep going. He's saying, keep seeking Jesus, keep following Jesus, keep having faith in Jesus.

And he tells them not to give up. And he says in verse 39, but we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

And what he's pleading with them is, don't turn away from Jesus. Don't give up following Jesus. Don't stop looking to Jesus. Because he says, it will be far worse for you.

[10 : 28] It will be awful for you, in fact. He says, you will be destroyed. And the word destroyed there, it means, it's the same word that Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount.

To describe someone who is on the broad road that leads to destruction. You remember that Jesus emphasized that in order to be a Christian, you have to enter through the narrow gate.

Because he says, wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction. And many there be that go in it. But narrow is the gate, and difficult is the way which leads to life, and few there be that find it.

And so what we're being told here, and what's applicable to you as someone who's unconverted, is that you're being told here, by the writer to the Hebrews, seek the narrow way because it leads to life.

Look to Jesus because he gives to you the promise of eternal life. But whatever you do, he says, don't stay on the broad road that leads to destruction. Don't stay on the broad road that leads to an end in hell.

[11 : 38] He says, have faith in Jesus Christ because it leads to life. Have faith in Jesus Christ. But Murdo, what does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ?

Well, we're told in verse 1 that faith in Jesus Christ, trust in Jesus Christ, believing in Jesus Christ, he says, is the assurance, it's the confidence, it's the substance of things hoped for.

And that word, assurance or confidence or substance, it refers to a passion. A living passion, a real passion.

Because in order to have faith, in order to believe or to trust, it must be in something. Or more importantly, it must be in someone. Someone outside of yourself.

And so having faith in Jesus Christ must be in Jesus Christ. And you know, that might seem like an obvious thing to say, but sometimes it's the most obvious things that we get completely wrong.

[12 : 45] Because if we must have faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved, then we have to be confident as to who this Jesus is and why we need him.

We have to be confident that this Jesus is trustworthy. So, who is Jesus Christ? And how do we know who Jesus is?

And you know the answer. We all know that the Bible tells us about Jesus. But how do we know the Bible is trustworthy? How can we trust this book that we're looking at this morning?

Well, we can trust the Bible. We can know it's true because the wonderful thing about the Bible is that it was written by over 40 authors. During over a 1500 year period.

It says it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. All these authors that wrote this one book, they include people like Moses and David and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel and Luke and Paul and Peter and John.

[13 : 46] All these authors, they were from all walks of life, living in different locations, living in different generations, sometimes centuries apart. And some of them, these men, they were shepherds or businessmen.

Some were soldiers or fishermen or physicians or preachers and even kings. And yet what's remarkable about this wonderful book is that all 66 books in this Bible, they all agree with one another.

They all convey to us the substance of one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so if the Bible is trustworthy, then the substance of the Bible must be trustworthy.

And so the person that the Bible speaks about must be trustworthy. Jesus must be trustworthy. And therefore we can have confidence in him. And Jesus, as you know, he's revealed to us in the Bible as God's eternal son who became man.

He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, born without sin, lived a sinless life. Yet he became sin out of love for lost sinners like you and me.

[15 : 01] He became sin in order to make sinners righteous in God's sight. Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross. He died the curse of death. He was buried, but rose again after three days.

Then he ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of his father. And one day he will come again to judge the living and the dead. My friend, this Jesus, who is revealed to us in the Bible, he is trustworthy.

He is trustworthy. But sadly, many people don't believe this. They don't want to listen to any of it. They don't care whether Jesus is trustworthy or not.

But here's the point. For those of you who are unconverted here today, what's interesting about your position is that you believe all this.

You believe what the Bible says. You know that Jesus is trustworthy. You have confidence in Jesus Christ.

[16 : 09] You have confidence that he is who the Bible says he is. You know that he is the savior of sinners. You have confidence in Jesus Christ. But you wouldn't describe yourself as a Christian.

So where does that leave you? Where does that leave you today? Sitting here. It leaves you maybe with confidence in Jesus. But the next question is, do you have conviction about Jesus?

Because saving faith, as we'll see, saving faith in Jesus Christ, it not only involves confidence, it also involves conviction. And that's what we'll see secondly.

Confidence, conviction. It says in verse one, now faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

People often say that Christianity is a blind act of faith. It's blind faith. That's what they call it. They say that believing in God, trusting in Jesus Christ for your salvation, it's just a step in the dark.

[17 : 19] It's blind faith. And yes, it's true. No one has ever seen God. None of us have had the privilege of being in the presence of Jesus.

Some people say that they would believe in God and they would trust in Jesus if they saw Jesus with their own eyes. Or if they saw a miracle. Or if they heard God speaking to them audibly.

Or if they saw this great vision of Jesus. Or they witnessed something extraordinary. They say that they would believe in God and trust in Jesus Christ and become a Christian if there was just a little bit more evidence.

Because in their mind, without evidence, Christianity is just blind faith. And blind faith, they say, is completely nonsensical.

It's absurd. It's madness. It's almost insanity. You know what's amazing? The writer to the Hebrews agrees. He agrees that blind faith is irrational.

[18 : 24] He agrees that faith without evidence is foolishness. Which is why he says in verse 1, Faith is the confidence of things hoped for. The conviction of things not seen.

The authorized version uses the word evidence. The evidence of things not seen. Which highlights to us that the word conviction or evidence, it's a legal word.

It's courtroom language. It's a word that belongs to the legal system. Because in a courtroom setting, in order to have a criminal convicted of a crime, there has to be compelling evidence that they have committed such a crime.

In order to guarantee conviction, there has to be evidence. And you know, the same is true with faith in Jesus Christ. Because in order to have faith in Jesus Christ, there must be conviction.

There must be compelling evidence that this Jesus is who he says he is. And you know, with this courtroom language, I want us just for a moment to put Jesus on trial.

[19 : 34] And I want us to consider three witnesses who testify to his genuineness and his trustworthiness. So three witnesses.

The first witness I want to call is creation. The creation has been testifying to the trustworthiness of Jesus since the very beginning.

We read earlier of the creation account in Genesis 1 and how God brought everything into being by just the word of his power. And this is what's confirmed to us in verse 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. And so, the creation, it wasn't a big bang.

It wasn't an accident. It wasn't a collision of millions of atoms and molecules that brought this perfectly ordered world of times and seasons, years and days into being.

[20 : 36] No, God said, let there be, and it was. And he saw that it was good. And from that first moment when God said, let there be light, the creation, it has been testifying to the trustworthiness of Jesus.

Because the Bible tells us that everything was made through Jesus. and that without Jesus, nothing could be made. He is the word that was in the beginning with God.

And then in Psalm 19, which we were singing earlier, the psalmist affirmed to us that since the beginning of the creation, the heavens have been declaring, they have been testifying to the glory of God.

And the skies, they have been proclaiming God's handiwork. where every morning we have a new sunrise. Every evening, there's another sunset.

The moon and the stars that light up the night sky. The creation, he says, they're continuously testifying to its creator and his power over all things.

[21 : 42] And Psalm 19 says that the testimony of creation, it's like a sermon that has been proclaimed to the whole world. Everyone can see it. Everyone can hear God's sermon.

In fact, you could say that because it was, it began at the beginning, it's the longest sermon that's ever been preached. And my friend, we are the audience of God's sermon.

And the content of his sermon is that everything we see around us from the brightness of the sun to the shining of the moon to the vastness and the greatness of the stars to the shape and formation of all the hills and the flow of all the rivers to the powers of the sea and even all the different species of animals and mammals and birds and insects.

All these things, even the crying of a little baby, even yourself, fearfully and wonderfully made. All these things, through it all, the creation is testifying to us and revealing to us and witnessing for us the glory and the majesty of Jesus Christ.

So that's the first witness. Then the second witness I want to call to testify to the trustworthiness of Jesus is your own conscience.

[23 : 01] Your own conscience. My friend, your conscience is a God-given conscience. When Adam was created, he was, as we read, created in the image and likeness of his creator.

And he was created in such a way that the law of God was written upon his heart. Adam was created in perfection. He possessed perfect knowledge, righteousness and holiness.

But when Adam sinned and when he broke God's law by taking from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we've read the narrative before, when Adam sinned, Adam knew immediately that he had done something wrong.

were told that his eyes were opened and he knew that he was naked. And so what did Adam do? He went and hid himself. He went to cry and hide from God.

But Adam quickly discovered that with God you can run but you can't hide. And when God found Adam, Adam immediately confessed, I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself.

[24 : 11] But then God asked the question, who told you that you were naked? Who told you that you were naked?

Who told you that you had sinned? Who told you that you broke my commandments? My friend, Adam's conscience told him. And you know, our conscience, it's God given and it's there for our benefit.

It's there to correct us when we do wrong. It's there to challenge us when we break God's commandments. Our conscience is there to remind us that we are accountable to our creator, Jesus Christ.

But what you find with so many people is that their conscience, it certainly works. They know it's there but they just choose to ignore it. They experience conviction of sin.

They know that what they're doing is wrong. They know that they should be somewhere else or doing something else. But the frightening thing is they silence their conscience.

[25 : 18] Do you silence your conscience? My friend, how is your conscience today? Is it testifying to you that Jesus is trustworthy?

Is it reminding you that you need to be saved? Is your conscience yet again affirming to you that the only way to be saved is through faith in Jesus Christ?

How is it with your conscience? Does your conscience bother you? I hope it does. I really hope it does.

But you know, there's one more witness. there's the creation, the conscience, and the Christian.

The testimony of the Christian is the most compelling evidence that Jesus is trustworthy. Because when you listen to the testimony of a Christian, especially a Christian who's an old Christian, they've been following the Lord for many years.

[26 : 28] And you know, it's good to listen to testimonies. I'd encourage you to always listen to testimonies. come and listen to testimonies. Because when you listen to the testimony of a Christian, you hear how their life has changed and how their desires have changed.

And even how they view life, their view of life has completely changed. And what's remarkable is that every Christian, however they were brought to the Lord, they can all attribute that change in their life to Jesus Christ.

Every Christian, they don't talk about themselves, that they saved themselves. They talk about Jesus saving them by faith. And where they were once unable to say, these Christians, that they loved the Lord, they now can say, I love the Lord.

Where they were once unwilling to testify to the trustworthiness of Jesus Christ, they now can. They say, yes, he is trustworthy. And for you, you know, my unconverted friend, the testimony of the Christian, whether he or she is in your home, might be your husband, might be your wife, might be your own children.

They're in your home. These Christians, they're in your family. They're in your village. They're on your street. They're in your workplace. They're in the shop.

[27 : 58] They're everywhere around you. They're all around you. And these Christians, they're testifying to you that you need to put your trust in Jesus Christ. Because in order to have faith in Jesus Christ, there must be conviction.

There must be compelling evidence that Jesus is trustworthy. And these three witnesses, creation, your conscience, and the Christian.

They're evidence. It should be compelling. It should bring conviction where you are confident that Jesus is who he says he is. And that you are convicted that Jesus is trustworthy.

So trustworthy that you're willing to make a commitment to him. what does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ? Confidence, conviction, and commitment.

Commitment. Look again at verse 1. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

[29 : 09] For by it, the people of old receive their commendation. So the word faith, it's actually mentioned 25 times in this one chapter. And as we said, this chapter is all about answering the question, what does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ?

And the way that the question is answered is by giving examples of people who walked by faith. He talks about their Christian witness. And he talks about all these people, Noah, Moses, and Abraham, and Rahab.

And he says they all lived their lives looking to Jesus the Messiah because they knew that Jesus is better. They were confident that Jesus is who he says he is. And they were convicted about Jesus being trustworthy.

And because of this, he says, they committed their lives to Jesus Christ by faith. So the outworking of that confidence and that conviction was commitment.

The outworking of their faith, it was demonstrated by their actions. That's why we're told in verse 2 that the people of old were commended for their faith.

[30 : 18] They were commended for their faith because their faith was evident. It was demonstrated. It was committed faith. It was faith that responded in obedience.

Faith that responded in obedience. faith. Just give me your ear for a minute. If you're not committed to Jesus Christ, give me your ear for one minute.

This is where many of you draw the line at Christianity. You draw the line at commitment. hand. I know that many of you here, you can say that you're confident that Jesus is who he says he is.

You believe in God. You believe in Jesus. You believe the teaching of the Bible. You believe everything the Bible has to say about God, Jesus, mankind, sin, death, heaven, and hell.

You believe it all. You're confident that the Bible is true and Jesus is who he says he is. And you also have conviction. You know that the evidence is compelling.

[31 : 35] The creation speaks of Jesus. Your conscience that you need Jesus. The Christian, they've been saved only by Jesus.

You know that they testify and they convince you that Jesus is trustworthy. But the issue, that issue is commitment to Jesus.

The issue isn't confidence in Jesus. The issue isn't conviction about Jesus. The issue is commitment to Jesus. The issue is committing your life to Jesus Christ. And that, my friend, is an act of faith.

Because faith in Jesus Christ, as the Bible says, it's a gift from God. And because it's a gift from God, we have to receive it. And we receive it by our confidence in Jesus our conviction about Jesus and lastly, our commitment to Jesus.

And you know, this is what our catechism teaches us. We often want to just shut the catechism aside, but you know, question 86 in the catechism, it's in your intimations. It asks the same question we're asking here.

[32 : 43] What is faith in Jesus Christ? And the catechism just says, faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace. It's a gift. whereby we receive and we rest upon Jesus Christ alone for our salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

So faith in Jesus Christ, it's a gift. That means you must receive it, accept it, believe it, trust it, and rest upon it. You must commit to it.

You must actively ask to be saved and commit your life to Jesus Christ. You have to actively ask and you shall receive and once you've asked, you actively commit your life to Jesus Christ.

You have to love Jesus, my friend. You have to lean upon Jesus and you have to live for Jesus. It's commitment. Now I know that many of you will not want to commit because you have all these other things in your life you still want to hold on to.

But as we said throughout the whole of Ecclesiastes, what is the point to it all? It will serve you no purpose when the end comes. You have to commit.

[34 : 04] You have to have confidence, conviction, and commitment to Jesus Christ. I can't do it for you. There are days I wish I could.

I wish I could save you myself. But you have to commit your life to Jesus Christ. And faith in Jesus Christ, it's a personal act of commitment.

Faith in Jesus Christ is a personal act of commitment to Jesus Christ. That's the only way to be saved. Commitment. And I know that for many of you, the issues.

The issue is not confidence in Jesus. The issue is not conviction about Jesus. The issue, I don't know why it's such an issue with you. The issue is commitment to Jesus Christ.

The issue is commitment to Jesus Christ. faith. And so as we begin our study of this chapter of faith, we're asking what does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ?

[35 : 12] Faith in Jesus Christ as we've seen it involves confidence in Jesus, conviction about Jesus, and importantly commitment to Jesus. And my friend, the last thing I'm going to say to you today, do you not think it's about time?

Do you not think it's about time that you've made that personal commitment to Jesus Christ? What are you putting on? What's holding you back?

Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray.

O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for the revelation of thyself in thy word. We give thanks Lord that thou are a God who has made thyself known and that we are able to see the beauty of Jesus in thy word.

We pray that we would trust in him, that we would lean upon him, that we would love him, that we would follow him, that we would commit our lives to him. And realize that when we do, he promises to do in us and for us, exceedingly abundantly above all, more than we could ask or even think.

[36 : 35] Help us to see Jesus not only as our king, but also as our friend, one who sticks closer than any brother, one who reminds us that greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Go before us then, we pray. Part us with thy blessing and do us good. To take away our iniquity, receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen. We shall conclude our service this morning by singing to God's praise in Psalm 40.

Psalm 40 in the Scottish Psalter, page 259. Amen. Psalm 40. We're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 4.

As you know, the words of Psalm 40, they are the testimony of the Christian. They are witnessing, testifying about Jesus and what he does in the life of a Christian.

He says, I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear. At length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear. He took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay.

[37 : 55] And on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way. He put a new song in my mouth, O God to magnify. Many shall see it and shall fear. And on the Lord rely.

And then he says, the Christian is saying to those who are still not Christians, oh blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies. You're blessed if you trust Jesus, respecting not the plough nor such as turn aside to lies.

So Psalm 40, these verses to God's praise. I wish were the Lord my God and patiently fulfillment and churches and He the who And cry to hear It took it off A fearful bed And brought the mighty clay

And on our own He set my feet Establishing my way He put a new song in my mind A God to magnify Many shall see it And shall fear And on the Lord rely O blessed is the man

Whose Christ upon the Lord relies Respecting not the proud Nor such And turn aside To
life The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of
the Holy Spirit Be with you all Now and forevermore Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen
Amen