



SAVING FAITH

“1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report. 3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. 5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. 7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.”

Saving Faith

To begin our study, I want you to turn in your Bible to John's gospel chapter 2. We're going to use that as a beginning point and then go to another portion of scripture, which I'll mention later. But this is a perfect place to begin a discussion of the nature of saving faith, because Jesus identifies here a non-saving kind of faith.

In fact, at this particular point, Jesus had done some marvelous miracles of healing. He had also demonstrated His power over the kingdom of darkness. "He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name," – verse 23 says – "beholding His signs which He was doing." There in John 2:23, John reminds us that Jesus had done these signs, these miracles, and the people believed in His name.

But verse 24 is very important. "Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." They believed in Him, but He did not commit Himself to them as their Savior, as their Lord, because He knew what was in them, and what was in them was something less than saving faith. They believed, but it wasn't a saving belief.

In chapter 6 of John and verse 6, we find another degree of this non-saving faith described. In the case I just read you, there were people exposed to the miracles and the signs that Jesus did, and they believed, but it wasn't a saving faith.

Well, when we come to chapter 6 some time has passed, and some of those people have attached themselves to Jesus, and they have followed Him for a while. In fact, they were there when He fed the five thousand, or better when He fed the twenty thousand: five thousand men; in addition to that, the women and children could have swelled the crowd to twenty thousand, and He basically created food – an incredible miracle. And then He taught. And then it says in verse 66, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."

It is possible to have a momentary non-saving faith, and it is possible to have a somewhat prolonged saving faith where you're actually described as a disciple; but it isn't the real thing,

because at some point you turn and walk away when the teaching doesn't quite suit you. The question then arises, "What is the faith that saves? What kind of faith is it that really saves?" And that's what we want to answer this morning.

To understand faith, I suppose we could start in the secular sense with the dictionary definition. And looking at the Oxford American Dictionary this is what we read about faith. Faith is reliance or trust in a person or thing. It is belief in a religious doctrine. It is a system of religious belief, i.e., the Christian faith. It is loyalty, sincerity. Well, that's a fairly decent definition of faith: reliance, trust, loyalty, sincerity.

But for even a better definition of faith out of a dictionary we turn from the Oxford American Dictionary to the Oxford English Dictionary, and we find that this is how the English define faith: confidence, reliance, trust, beliefs proceeding from reliance on testimony or authority, the duty of fulfilling one's trust, allegiance owed to a superior, the obligation of a promise or engagement; and the quality of fulfilling one's trust, faithfulness, fidelity and loyalty – a more extensive and even a better definition.

But there's another paragraph in the Oxford English Dictionary that is just tremendous. The Oxford English Dictionary includes a theological definition of faith. This is what it says. That kind of faith is distinctively called saving or justifying faith by which in the teaching of the New Testament a sinner is justified in the sight of God. This is variously defined by theologians, but there is general agreement in regard to it as a conviction practically operative on the character and will and thus opposed to the mere intellectual assent to religious truth sometimes called speculative faith.

You know, I know a lot of theologians who ought to go get an Oxford English Dictionary. That is a tremendous definition of saving faith. Let me read that later part. "It as a conviction practically operative on the character and will and thus opposed to the mere intellectual assent to religious truth sometimes called speculative faith." End quote. What they're saying is, it is a belief and a conviction that changes your life, changes the way you are; it affects your character and your will. There are people who always want a strip of faith. They want to redefine faith without the idea of loyalty or faithfulness or allegiance or submission or duty or fidelity or obligation. They want to make faith simplistic where you just sort of believe in Jesus and that's it.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the word “believe,” which of course in many ways is a synonym to faith, is defined this way: “To have confidence in a person, and consequently to rely upon or trust to him or her.” The dictionary notes that believe is derived from root words that mean “to hold estimable, valuable, pleasing or satisfactory,” or “to be satisfied with.” Summing that up, “believe” in the Oxford English Dictionary means “to be completely satisfied with a person so as to have confidence and trust in that person.” Another great definition.

What is saving faith? It is believing in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ to the degree that you are completely satisfied with Him so as to commit your life to Him in loyalty, faithfulness, allegiance, submission, duty, fidelity, obligation; and it is not mere intellectual assent. That’s a great definition from the dictionary. Faith cannot be placed in opposition to commitment, to surrender, to repentance, to delighting in the Lord. Now, so much for a dictionary definition, let’s get a biblical one.

When you come to Hebrews chapter 11 you come to the great faith chapter of the Bible. It is given to us for the purpose of defining faith. We saw in the account of John’s gospel that there’s a kind of faith that doesn’t save. And in one case Jesus turned away from them; and in the other case, they turned away from Him. But we’re going to find in Hebrews 11 the nature of the faith that saves. And I want you just to understand two things about it: what faith is, and what faith does. And when we know what it is, that is His inherent character, and what it does, we will have our definition of saving faith.

First of all, what is this faith? Verse 1: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” Now those three verses open to us the definition of faith. Let me give you just a little background on the entire chapter.

As the book indicates, it was written to Jews, to Hebrews. And in the Hebrew culture and in the Hebrew society, first century Judaism, the dominating religious thought was that of the Pharisees. Because they subscribed to the highest level of devotion to the Mosaic law, and took the law to its very nth degree most seriously, therefore they were sort of the reigning

religious authorities, they had the highest standard. And according to the Pharisaism of first century Judaism, righteousness – being right with God, forgiveness from sin and ultimate salvation could only be achieved through a rigorous system of meritorious works. In other words, you sort of saved yourself by your religious activities and by your moral duties.

Jewish tradition had twisted God's law, the law that had been given to show man was a sinner and turned it into a means of salvation. And if you just kept God's law, and the six hundred plus additional traditional laws that had been added to the law of God, and you accomplished some level of competence in keeping those, you had gained enough meritorious works to have purchased your righteousness, your forgiveness, and your ultimate place in the eternal kingdom.

Now we well know that in the New Testament this matter of work-based salvation is dealt with repeatedly. In the book of Romans, in the book of Galatians, in the book of Philippians, in 1 Timothy, in a lot of places works righteousness is directly attacked and shown to be a misrepresentation of what the Scripture teaches. The problem in this community of Hebrews to which this letter was sent was that even after they had been shown the basics of Christ, the basics of the gospel, the truths of Christ's death and resurrection, some of them were unwilling to abandon their religion of works righteousness. They weren't willing to let go. And so the writer pens this eleventh chapter to show them that salvation has never been by works, never. And you will notice he goes all the way back to the time of Adam.

In verse 4, "By faith Abel." Verse 5, "By faith Enoch." Verse 7, "By faith Noah." Verse 8, "By faith Abraham." Verse 11, "By faith Sarah," and so it goes. Verse 20, "By faith Isaac, by faith Jacob, by faith Joseph, by faith Moses." It was never anything but faith. He is really undercutting this Pharisaic system of meritorious works designed to earn salvation.

The Old Testament in Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 4, says, "The just shall live by faith." That's not a truth about the New Testament; that's a truth about God's plan of redemption from beginning to end. And as Hebrews 11 points out, from Adam on, the instrument of God's salvation has been faith not works. "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves."

Works are a byproduct of faith, never the means of salvation. And Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted three times in the New Testament, once in Hebrews 10:38. In verse 38 he quotes, “The just shall live by faith or the righteous shall live by faith.”

And that’s what triggers this eleventh chapter. Having said that in 10:38 and quoted Habakkuk 2:4, the writer now illustrates it. Chapter 10, by the way, the whole chapter is about justification by faith, and chapter 11 are examples of the people who were justified by their faith. They proved that salvation is not by work.

Now the question is, “All right, we’re justified by faith. But what kind of faith? What is the faith that saves?” That is the question, and he defines it for us in the opening chapter. Let me give you several thoughts.

Number one: This faith can be defined as the assurance of things hoped for. It is the assurance of things hoped for. It is not just a faith like those temporary disciples that is linked to something happening now, it is a faith that is really based on something future, something hoped for. What saving faith does is translate the promises for God for the future into the present tense.

In other words, real saving faith implicitly takes God at His word about the future. Faith is a supernatural confidence that God will actually someday take us to heaven, that He will actually someday make us perfect and free from sin, that He will actually someday bring us face to face with Christ and make us like Him, that He will actually someday reward us with eternal reward, that He will someday actually take us to a place He’s prepared for us; none of which we have ever seen, nor has anybody ever come back to tell us about it. So, it’s a matter of hope.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. And why do we hope for them? Because they are promised by God. So, faith is believing the promise of God for the future. In fact, the word “assurance” is an interesting word in the Greek, it’s hupostasis. It comes from two Greek words: stasis means “to stand,” and hupo means “under.” “To stand under.” It’s like a foundation; you see them pouring the footings for the foundation of that new building that stands under the building. He’s saying here faith is the foundation of things hoped for.

The word also is used in ancient Greek literature to refer to legal documents deposited in the archives that formed the evidence of ownership of certain land. It would be like a title deed. Whenever there was a debate about who owned this property, one would need to go to the archives, pull out the documentation that became the foundation for defining the owner. That's hupostasis. And that is the sense in which it is used here in Hebrews.

Faith is the title deed to the future. Faith is the foundation, believing that the promises of God yet to come to pass will come to pass. Faith is indeed the title deed for things hoped for. The King James Version of this verse puts it this way: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for."

Now, faith is a substance, faith is foundation, faith is title deed. Saving faith is not wishful thinking. It's not like you hear people talk today, "Well, I'm really believing hard, hoping I'll make it happen."

Believing doesn't make anything happen. Saving faith doesn't make something happen. Saving faith is placed in something that was promised to happen. That's all in the power of God. People think they can believe things into existence. If you believe hard enough you can create reality. That's not biblical faith; that's folly, that's foolishness.

Faith is believing something that God promises will happen, not because we will it to happen, but because He pledged it will happen. It is absolutely certain with regard to the promises of Scripture. And anybody who has weak view of the Bible is bound to have weak faith, right? It is the faith that God has the ability and the will to fulfill His promises, that He can be trusted. Faith then is the God wrought confidence about the truth of the promises of the Bible.

Now, you say, "Well, doesn't everybody have faith?" Well, not this kind. This is supernatural. This is a supernatural certainty about the truth of the gospel and the reliability of the Bible and the promises of God when we have no experience as such in any of those things. That's why it's so different than human faith. Let me tell you what I mean.

The true faith, the saving faith is something God gives us. "For by grace are you saved through faith; that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." You don't have the faith that saves, it's not natural. It's not natural to believe in something you've never seen. It's not

natural to believe in someone you've never seen. When people do that, sometimes we put them in mental institutions, because we say they're not rational. When they create an imaginary world with imaginary characters, an imaginary reality, and an imaginary present, and an imaginary future, we say they're not sane, because from the natural side those things are not reasonable. We believe in a God we've never seen, a Christ we've never seen, a Spirit we've never seen. We believe we're going to a heaven we've never seen to dwell in a glorified body we've never seen for an eternity we could never experience in this life.

Why do we believe all that? It's not natural to believe that. Now we should be more like the Missouri folks, "Show me. How can I believe what I can't see? Don't just tell me, prove it."

We're wired to see logical reasons why we should believe. That's how human faith operates. You have faith, it's true. You exercise it every time you drink water out of a faucet. You don't know what's playing in the pipes, and that's obvious, you just drink. You go to a restaurant; you eat what they serve you. You have no idea; and I'm certainly not here to tell you, because I don't want to know either.

You go to the drug store, and you get a prescription, and you take it, because it says on there, "Take this, two every four hours," and you do it. And you go to the hospital, and you have surgery. And maybe you never even met the doctor; but I'll tell you, you'll never know whether you have when you get to surgery because they all wear masks.

You exercise natural faith all the time. You let that dentist drill around, you hope he's in the right tooth. You drop your film at the drug store. You get on the freeway, and you go sixty miles an hour, and you just believe your brakes will work. You don't understand brakes, surgery, dental work, or the water supply; but you do that.

Why do you do that? Experience has taught you; experience has taught you that that's an okay thing to do, right? You've lived long enough, your experiences taught you that water can generally be trusted, brakes normally don't fail, surgeons usually take out the thing they are supposed to take out and not something else, drug stores usually get you the right stuff. Experience tells you that, and you say, "Well, my senses, my rational senses don't lie. That's reasonable."

But sometimes it's not. Our senses may lie, people may fail, circumstances do change, brakes fail. We're not talking about that kind of faith based upon experience, because when you came to Jesus Christ you put your faith in something you had never experienced. You were just desperate enough to do that. But you believed the promises of the Bible. Why? Because God supernaturally granted you the faith. This is not human faith; this is the faith that God works in us. And although the truth of the gospel is confirmed by much evidence, human nature is predisposed to reject that truth, because it wants to see and experience before it believes.

But then a sinner comes to the greatest level of desperation, and it's always almost comical when he happens to be some kind of scientific atheist who in a matter of moments has his atheism shattered, which he's had a whole lifetime to accumulate through his supposed logic and embraces Jesus Christ in the desperation of his desire for forgiveness. And all of a sudden he's able to believe without any proof. That's the gift of God. And then once you believe, you go back to the Word of God, and you begin to see the reasonableness of what you have come to believe through the pages of Scripture.

Apologetics is mostly for Christians to strengthen their faith. The miracle of saving faith is a miracle. The faith described in Hebrews 11 is focused on the infinitely more dependable object of the Lord Jesus Christ, perfectly dependable, can be trusted. But sinners really don't fully understand that when they come to Him. It's a matter of faith.

And so here we are. We tend to believe only in what we can see, what we can hear, what we can taste, and what we can feel. If we can't process it through our senses and through our mind we tend not to believe it. We trust the water, the brakes, the surgeon, the dentist, the drug store, whatever, because we've had experience that tells us that generally we can trust them. But when we are talking about saving faith we're talking about a supernatural conviction based on no experience.

In fact, a natural man, an unconverted man, according to 1 Corinthians 2:14 does not accept the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised, and he's spiritually dead. So here you have a man who's dead spiritually, he's alive physically; so, the only faith that operates is the faith that's connected to his physical experiences. He has no spiritual faith because he's spiritually

dead, and that dimension provides him with no real experience. And so, in the midst of his deadness he comes to faith in Christ only when God intervenes in his life and grants him supernatural faith that is not human and not natural.

I suppose verse 27 of this chapter sums it up as well as any when it says about Moses that he left Egypt. He was the prince in Egypt. He could have had a career in Egypt that might have even led him to the role of pharaoh, and he could have been the richest of the rich and the most prominent of the prominent. But he left, walked away, had no fear for the wrath of the king, and he endured through all of it because he could see Him who is unseen.

That's not normal. When somebody operates on those kinds of ideas, as I said, we usually classify them as mentally ill. We believe in one whom we've never seen. We believe we're going to a place we've never been, to become the likes of which we can't even imagine. So faith is the assurance of things hoped for.

Secondly, faith is the conviction of things not seen. That verse 27 transitions us into this point. Faith is the conviction of things not seen. This parallel phrase to the first phrase carries the idea a little bit further. It carries it from a foundation or an assurance to a conviction, and the word implies a deeper manifestation of that assurance.

Assurance goes deeper, it becomes a conviction. That is to say, we are prepared to live out our life on the basis of that belief. We are prepared to say, "My life is going to be committed to this, and it's going to determine what I do, and where I go, and how I think, and how I talk, and how I live."

We are going to behave as if these promises are absolutely true. It's the conviction of things not seen we haven't seen God, we haven't seen Christ, we haven't seen the Holy Spirit, we haven't seen heaven, we haven't seen a glorified body, we haven't seen our place prepared. We haven't seen any of that. We live every moment as though it is reality though, don't we, because we have that conviction of what we've never seen being true. Listen to how Peter described it in 1 Peter 1:8 and 9. "Although we have not yet seen Christ, we love Him."

Peter says then, “We have not yet seen Christ, but we love Him.” He goes on, “And though we do not see Him now, we believe in Him. With an expressible and glorious joy we are committed to Him, obtaining faith’s outcome, the salvation of our souls.”

Here we are. We love Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we sing praise to Christ, we glorify Christ, we can’t wait to be with Christ, and we’ve never seen Him. That’s not natural, it is a conviction given by God.

Now such faith is unassailable. It’s unassailable. No matter what tests it, no matter what it costs, it endures. It is a conviction of things not seen. And in fact, the whole point of chapter 11 is to show it’s an unbreakable, unassailable, enduring, persevering faith, because all the examples in Hebrews 11 show people whose faith was severely tested.

It never says in this chapter, “By faith so-and-so lived out his days and died.” It doesn’t say that. Every single mention of these people and every single illustration of operative faith is in a testing environment, and the whole idea is to show you that faith stands the test. The nature of saving faith is that it is confidence, an assurance, a foundation of things hoped for.

Deeper yet, it is a conviction. It is a conviction that what you haven’t seen is reality. And going one step beyond that, it is unassailable, and enduring, and persevering, and can’t be destroyed.

The greatest Old Testament evidence of that was the life of Job, wasn’t it? Satan did everything he could to destroy Job’s faith, couldn’t do it. In the New Testament he went after Peter, couldn’t do it. Why? Because Job was something special, and Peter was something special. Well, they were both special, but they were also both granted by God an unassailable and enduring faith.

This faith is firm. It’s a supernatural conviction that governs the true believer’s behavior. It endures, and it perseveres, and it obeys. All the way through this chapter people are worshipping, obeying, enduring, sacrificing, working, and all by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith. It is a commitment that never changes.

Some people say, “Well, you can have your faith a little while and lose it. And even if you have your faith a little while and lose it, as the no lordship people say, you’re still a Christian, it’s just that your faith died.”

This isn’t my faith to start with, so if anybody’s faith died it wasn’t mine. And you’re telling me God gave me a temporary faith that had the capability of dying? I didn’t generate this deal in the beginning, and I certainly can’t sustain it. The only way that I can understand that kind of viewpoint would be to understand that God gave me a substandard kind of faith. But that’s not what the Bible teaches.

There are other people who say, “Well, you can lose your faith; and when you lose your faith you do lose your salvation.” That’s an Armenian view, but that’s got the same problem. This isn’t human faith; this is divine faith. God gives divine faith, its unassailable faith, and Hebrews 11 is the proof of that. It never says in Hebrews 11, “By faith so-and-so did this, and then he lost his faith and died, and we’re really sorry.” It doesn’t say that.

Now, there are three elements to faith. Give you a little theology here. Could even throw a little Latin at you: *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*; but that’s it. Theologians love Latin terms, I don’t know why, it’s more scholarly or something. But there are three elements of faith: knowledge, assent, and trust. And you have to understand those three features of faith: knowledge, assent, and trust.

Knowledge is the intellectual element. It is to understand the truth, the gospel. Assent is the emotional element. It is to find your heart drawn to what your head has learned. And trust is the voluntary element, or the volitional element. It’s when you make the commitment. Real faith involves all three. The mind understands, the emotions are drawn, the will makes the choice. Those three components are there.

In the case of those people in John 2, maybe all they had was mind; they saw miracles and that was it. They had that kind of faith, they had that *notitia* faith, that knowledge. Maybe in John 6 they had knowledge, and they followed Jesus because their emotions were drawn to what their mind grasped, and they went into that second, that assent; but they never got to the third place where their will was enacted to make a commitment voluntarily of their life in time and eternity to Christ. Saving faith has the mind embracing the knowledge, a recognition

and understanding of the truth that Jesus Christ saves. The heart then gives assent. The will responds with a personal commitment to Christ. That's what makes saving faith saving faith.

That final element, trust, the volitional component is the crowning element of believing, and it involves surrendering to the object of faith. It is personal appropriation of Christ as Lord and Savior. Saving faith then is the whole of my being; mind, emotion, and will embracing Christ, and saying, "I'm satisfied with Him. I pledge to Him my commitment, my life, my loyalty, my trust."

Faith cannot be divorced from commitment. It is what Jesus described in Matthew, "As a man who finds a pearl of great price, sells everything to get the pearl. Finds a treasure in the field, sells everything to get the treasure." It's a wholesale forsaking of all for Christ.

Now all three of those are in this text, all three. Look at verse 3: "By faith we understand." The first element of faith is understanding. Then verse 1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for." That's that assent. And then, "It is the conviction of things not seen." That's trust. We understand, we become assured, it becomes a settled conviction, and we make the commitment.

The men and women then profiled in the rest of the chapter are in a hall of faith. They were all fully committed: mind, heart, soul to the object of their faith.

A third thought: Faith is believing that God is. We've said the two things in verse 1 are true about faith. But go down to verse 6: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is."

Now you can't just say, "Well, I certainly believe in God, and I believe in the man upstairs," as the song writer put it; or Muslims, "I believe in Allah," or like the Greek philosophers, "I believe in the unknown God." No, no. Verse 6 says if you come to God you must believe that He is.

What does that mean? It means simply this: you must believe that God is the God who He is. You can't believe that He's some other God. You can't believe, as the liberals, that He's the ground of being. You have to believe in the God who is God; that is the God of the Bible,

whose highest revelation of Himself is in the person of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ, right? So, you're going to believe in God, then you have to believe in the God who is the God of Scripture, who is the God incarnate in Jesus Christ. You have to believe in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Clear faith that has an objective substance. It's not just believing in generic deity, even monotheistic deity. It is believing in the God who is God, the God of the Bible, revealed in Scripture, who revealed Himself incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. And if you're going to believe in Christ, as we said two weeks ago, you believe that He is a member of the Trinity, who was incarnated through the virgin birth, came into the world, lived a sinless life, therefore fulfilling all righteousness; died as a substitutionary atonement for sinners, rose from the grave the third day, was taken to the right hand of the Father as affirmation of the success of His sacrifice, and there He intercedes for us until He returns.

That's the Christ of Scripture. And the God of Scripture is the God revealed there who was incarnate in Christ; and if you're going to come to God you come believing that. You can't just strip faith down to some bare minimum. People say "Yeah, I believe in God," or, "Yeah, I believe in Jesus," and don't know any of those features of who God is, who Christ is, and what He did, and don't come all the way to that third step.

Leading evangelicals today are confused about this. An article recently written says, an evangelical article, "A person can place his or her trust in Jesus Christ and Him alone without understanding precisely how He takes away sin." Really? The article says it is possible to believe savingly in Christ without understanding the reality of His resurrection.

What does Romans 10:9 and 10 mean when it says, "If you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you'll be saved"? What Christ can you believe in if you don't believe in the crucified and risen One?

The same article says, "It's just enough to present only the core truth, namely that whoever believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life."

What Jesus Christ? Who was who and did what? That's what this is intending to say in verse 6. You must believe that He is who He is in the fullness of His revelation. And if you confess

with your mouth Jesus Christ as Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, then you're affirming all of His ministry and His death; you'll be saved. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. And there are lots of phony Jesus and false Christs, aren't there? Matthew 24:24 warns us.

When Hebrews 6 says, "You must believe that He is," it's telling us we must believe in the God of the Scripture, the one who gave His Son to die and rise again. Granted, Old Testament saints didn't have that full revelation, but they were saved through faith based upon what God had revealed to them. If they didn't have all we have, they believed all they had, and we believe all we have, and all we have includes Christ.

Faith, finally, is seeking God. It is the assurance of things hoped for, it is the conviction of things not seen, it is as, verse 6 indicates, believing that He is. And then the last point at the end of verse 6, "It is the believing that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

It's not enough – this might surprise you – but it's not enough just to believe that the God of the Bible exists. It's not enough to believe that the God of the Bible incarnated in Jesus Christ came in and did what Christ did. There's one other element: you must seek Him, and that's that third component again. That's where trust comes in. You seek Him. You seek Him as Savior; you seek Him as Lord. It's not enough to know about God and about Christ, it's only enough to know God and to know Christ. It's not enough to seek information, it's only enough to seek Him.

Isaiah said, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near."

Jeremiah said, "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart."

Amos said, "Seek Me that you may live." Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom and His

righteousness, and everything else will be added to you." Salvation happens when the penitent sinner understands, is emotionally drawn, and with all his heart seeks and intimate and personal relationship with Christ.

Instead of trying to earn favor with God, faith pursues God Himself. Instead of bartering for God's approval, faith follows after God as the soul's greatest pleasure. Faith then is seeking and finding God in Christ, desiring Him, being satisfied with Him, and wanting to give your

whole life to Him. It's finding Him, the bread that satisfies, the water that quenches. Now, in the next five minutes we'll finish the chapter.

What faith does. To understand faith, we've got to know what it does. We just talk about what it is. But what does it do? In a word: it perseveres in obedience; it perseveres in obedience.

In verse 4, you find faith worshipping. In verse 5, you find faith walking with God. In verse 7, you find it working for God; in verses 8 to 10, obeying God; in verse 11, overcoming barrenness; in verse 12, overpowering death. Faith enabled people to persevere to death, verses 13 to 16; to trust God with their possessions, verses 17 to 19; to believe God for the future, verses 20 to 23; to turn away from earthly treasure for heavenly reward, verses 24 to 26; to see Him who is invisible, verse 27; to receive miracles from the hand of God, verses 28 to 30; to have courage in the face of great danger, verses 31 to 34; to conquer kingdoms, perform acts of righteousness, obtain promises, shut the mouths of lions, quench the power of fire, escape the edge of the sword, from weakness be made strong, become mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight; through faith has overcome death, endure torture, outlasted chains, imprisonment, withstood temptation, undergone martyrdom, and survived all kinds of hardship, and that's verses 33 to 38.

If there's anything true about Hebrews 11 faith, it can't be killed, right? Boy, that's clear. It endures, it endures, it endures, it endures; it perseveres through all of that stuff. It holds onto God with love and assurance, and a deep-down confidence and unwavering trust. It is saving faith; it is defined in this chapter.

Let me take you through the chapter one more time; I'll do it twice in five minutes. "By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice." These are faith works, folks. "By faith Enoch walked with God. By faith Noah built an ark. By faith Abraham obeyed; by faith he lived in a foreign land; by faith he offered up Isaac." What a tough, tough decision that was.

"By faith Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph persevered to the end of their lives. By faith Moses' parents hid him. By faith Moses spurned Egypt in favor of the reproach of Christ; by faith he left Egypt without fear; by faith he kept the Passover. By faith Israel passed through the Red Sea; by faith they conquered Jericho. By faith Rahab welcomed the spies."

And what more shall I say? Time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Women received back their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured for not accepting their release in order that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others experienced mockings and scourgings, chains, and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawn in half, tempted, put to death with the sword. Went about in sheepskins, goatskins, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, wandering in deserts, mountains, caves and holes in the ground. That's how faith works. That's how faith works.

And they did all this – look at verse 39 and 40 – they did all this not having gained approval – I should say, all this having gained approval through their faith, but not having received what was promised. They never even saw the Messiah come. They never even knew about the cross and the resurrection. Because God had provided something better for us, we have all of that that they never had. I guess the writer is trying to say is if they had reason to live by faith, and if God could give them an enduring faith, and if God could give them an unassailable and unbreakable faith who never saw Christ, can't we depend upon God to give us an unassailable faith who are on this side of the cross?

And He's calling us to a life of faith. He's calling His readers, "Come on, let go of that Pharisaic works-righteousness stuff. It's by faith." And he starts out chapter 12, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us."

What are they witnessing to? The validity of saving faith, the permanence of saving faith, the power of saving faith, the unassailable character of saving faith: "Since we've seen their testimony, let's lay aside every encumbrance, the sin which so easily entangles us, and let's get in the faith race."

He's calling people to Christ; he's calling them to salvation; he's calling them to run by faith. These people proved the validity, the joy, the peace, the satisfaction, the power, and the

continuity of saving faith; and he says, “Come on everybody, get in the faith race.” When God grants the faith, it’s the faith that endures.

That’s certainly my prayer for you. Live by faith. I pray that your faith is saving faith.