

# What Faith Is

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're not going to be in 2 Samuel tonight. I decided to take a break from that tonight. I wasn't sure if I would just be the only one who showed up or Dan and me be the only ones here.

And so I'm going to save what I have prepared out of 2 Samuel chapter 3 for next time. Lord willing, if we have a next time, and who knows.

Rather than do that, I want to speak on a very important topic, one that ought to be important, well is important to us, and that is the topic of faith.

We're people of faith, right? I would hope so. And, you know, of course in our day, you know, the word faith in the media and other usages of the word, you kind of wonder, well, just what do they mean, you know?

That we are a faith group, or people of faith, or faith-based ministry, or faith this and faith that.

[ 1 : 26 ] And, of course, the word faith is, you know, certainly didn't originate with the Bible. The word faith existed, you know, alongside of the scripture.

And the word faith, of course, used to refer to and apply to many things. And so there are people today, you know, who are people of faith.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that they are of the faith that we're of. And so faith is a pretty important subject. We're saved by faith.

We're to live by faith. Again, we're people of faith. But what does that mean? What is faith? And I guess, really, that's what I want to talk about tonight out of possibly the one chapter in all of the Bible that speaks more directly to the subject of faith than any other.

Who can guess what passage that might be? Hebrews chapter 11, exactly. And so tonight, since we want to get home and watch the Super Bowl, I'm going to preach on that entire chapter and delve into the lives of each person, each Bible character.

[ 2 : 44 ] You know, that would take me a year of Sundays, if not more. Yeah. No, I'm just going to have us focus on the first few verses, first three verses and a little bit of verse six on the subject of faith.

What faith is. What faith is. And really, let me go ahead and say here at the beginning, what we have here is not so much a definition of faith, but rather a description of it.

Describing it so that we understand better what it is. Not just a definition, but a description of it, a picture of it. Something we can really see the facets of, as it is described here in the first three verses of Hebrews chapter 11.

Let me go ahead and read those first three verses. And I said I would, we would also be looking at the first part of verse six, but I'm going to wait until we get to that part of it before I read it.

So first three verses. Very familiar. Probably memorized by some of you here. And I'm actually reading it from the King James.

[ 4 : 00 ] This, by the way, is my prison Bible. I don't always take it to prison. I don't know if some of you can see that little cross there. That cross was made by a prisoner.

Not at the prison that we are ministering to and at, but previously around Memphis area. And one time I was preaching after I preached, one of the inmates came to me and gave me this little cross. And it has kind of a string on it so you can put it, it's a bookmark. And I said, well that is really neat because it's, you know, just really, you'll have to look at it when you can see it closer. And he said, I made that.

I said, well you did. And they said, I made it here in prison. And how did you do that? And he said, it's made out of threads from my shirt and t-shirts that I've discarded.

And I forgot now what he said because it's blue. There are two colors in it. And he used something that he could get a hold of in prison to make some of the colors there.

[ 5 : 09 ] And he twisted it in such a way, it's just really very special to me. All right. That doesn't have anything to do with faith. Well it does, obviously.

Certainly the symbol of what we base our faith on. True faith. So let me read the passage. Now faith is. That's how you know my title, what faith is. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.

The evidence of things not seen. For by it, that is by faith, the elders obtained a good report. Now that's just, that's not just elders in our church. The elders, the leaders, the fathers of our faith. [ 6 : 07 ] 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.

So we'll stop right there. What faith is. Understanding what faith is. And really I have just three points.

Verse one is kind of the, where, the obvious, very logical starting point. And that is the need for faith. If this is what faith is, as it's described for us in scripture, even before we describe the nature of it.

That, by the way, is my second point. The nature of true faith. We need to understand the need for it. I mean, why do we need it? Why do we need faith? And there's just a short little phrase there in verse one that tells us why we all need faith.

And not just all of us here in this building. Not even just all of us who are professing believers. But all mankind needs faith.

[ 7 : 20 ] This kind of faith. What do we need it for? Well, it says there in verse one, because it is the substance of things hoped for. Things hoped for.

We need faith because of that. Things hoped for. And things hoped for. That little phrase reveals a truth about every one of us.

A truth about all of mankind. And that truth is that there's something wrong with us. We're all born wrong with something wrong with us.

Mankind has something wrong with it. And what is that? It is that we're all dissatisfied. We come into this world dissatisfied.

Think about the tiniest little baby. Crying, wailing. Why? Because that baby is not satisfied. Of course, in the very simplest terms for little babies, that dissatisfaction is in the form of the need for food.

[ 8 : 33 ] I don't have enough of it. Or maybe some other issues. Very simple issues. But we come into this world dissatisfied. We don't have everything we need.

We are all incomplete. Now, that doesn't mean that the world at large understands that, knows that. They have a sense of it.

And that's why there is so much strife and so much anxiety and so much hate and so much desiring of things that we can't have.

And then when we get the things that we think we didn't have but need and now we have them, then it just, you know, something else takes its place. And so the dissatisfaction goes on and on and it never ends.

Because there is nothing in this world that will complete us, satisfy us, apart from faith.

[ 9 : 35 ] And the object of that faith, of course. A relationship with God. See, we come into this world without that relationship. And the only way we can have that relationship with God is through faith.

There's the need for faith. Because we're all dissatisfied. And we're dissatisfied because we're incomplete. You know, someone used this illustration.

What satisfies a dog? Now, personally, I don't care for dogs. We have a dog in our household. He's not my dog. I'm not a dog hater.

I just don't really care for it. Of course, I've explained this before. You already know that about your pastor. Some of you probably don't like me as much as you would want to because I have this aversion to dogs.

I just don't care for them. We have one in our household. But someone has suggested that there are really only four things that a dog needs so that that dog can be satisfied.

[ 10 : 40 ] Just four things. A good place to sleep. Now, our dog has a great place to sleep. Not in the house. Never allow that dog in my house.

But at nighttime, my son, especially in the wintertime, he'll bring the dog into the garage and put him in his kennel.

And he even has this very soft little cushion to lie on. And because it's cold, he bought him a little heater.

He has that heater sitting right there in front of the doorway to his kennel. And he runs that thing, keeps that dog nice and warm and satisfied.

Now, some of you have dogs who, you know, who live in the house. And they're satisfied because they have a very warm place there, you know, possibly on some little cushion by the fireplace.

[ 11 : 34 ] You know, that's kind of the image that we have. But really, a dog would be satisfied if the dog has a good place to sleep. A home.

All right, let's use that terminology. Second, something to eat. A dog has to have something to eat. All right, not just for biological reasons.

Can't survive, can't live without something to eat. But a dog is satisfied when he has a good, dry, warm, comfortable place, a good place to sleep and food.

Very, very basic, isn't it? And then I guess you could add a third thing. A dog is satisfied if he has achievement.

He achieves something. The saddest dog, the most dissatisfied dog, is the dog who's locked up in the backyard, in the fence, with nothing to do.

[ 12 : 33 ] No cat to chase or car to chase. Of course, our dog does chase cars and barks at them, but only for about a space of 30 or 40 feet.

That's as far as he can go, just along the fence line, and then it's over with, and he can't. But he can never chase it. You know, you watch these dogs, and it's kind of the quintessential thing about dogs.

At least those dogs are able to be free. And you're driving down the road, and that dog comes and follows you and chases you, barks at your tire and tries to beat the tire or bite the tire.

Of course, he never catches the car. Well, sometimes the car catches him or her. But there's always this drive, this desire for satisfied to catch something, whether it's, of course, our dog chases squirrels in the backyard.

Matthew told me, or said to me, in fact, just this morning, he said, one of these days, Samson is going to catch one of those squirrels. And I said to Matthew, I said, you better hope he never does catch the squirrel.

[ 13 : 37 ] He's going to be worse for it, you know. But this is what a dog needs, to have some achievement, you know. Whether it is, you know, like Matthew will take him to the dog park, and maybe he has a little ball or something to throw, and the dog will chase the ball and catch it and bring it back, or a stick or a bone or whatever it may be.

A dog, to be really satisfied, needs some achievement. So the dog needs a place to sleep, a home, to be satisfied. A dog needs something to eat, needs food, needs, you know, sustenance.

Dog needs achievement. And the fourth thing, a dog needs affection. Needs affection, right? Now, our dog's not going to ever get that from me.

You know, mean old dog hater, Don Coleman. Now, he's never going to get affection for me. In fact, I'm not sure, other than a few times that I've been in the backyard to try to take care of some of the weeds, I'm not sure I've ever even touched the dog other than that time.

All right, but now Matthew, on the other hand, I mean, he loves that dog. Grabs that dog, hugs that dog, chases him, wrestles with that dog on the ground.

[ 14 : 59 ] And just loves it. And so he gets affection from our son, and that brings satisfaction to a dog. Right? Now, this is kind of a lengthy illustration, but just think about it.

Want a happy dog? A dog that is satisfied? Then good home, food to eat, achievement from time to time, and affection.

And that's what a lot of people today are looking for. And when they get it, if they get it, all that is is just a little bit better than a dog's life. What I'm saying is you can have all those things.

And I guess for people, we might add clothing. You know, we kind of, you know, need that to be satisfied. We don't like to walk around naked. I can't think of anything more uncomfortable and dissatisfying than that.

And we could add a few other things, but just basic things. And so if you get all those things, then great. But that's not a whole lot better than just simply a dog's life. But the point is for us.

[16:08] I mean, we're different than dogs, different than animals, contrary to what, you know, some people are trying to claim, that we may be just a little bit more developed than some of the lower animals, but we're just animals nonetheless.

I don't agree with that. We're something different, something special, created by God. And we were created for something more than just something a little bit better than a dog's life.

You know, a home, you know, a shelter, you know, roof over our head, and clothes, and food, and achievement, and affection. We were made for a whole lot more than that.

And so we need faith. And what were we made for? To have hope. Hope for something that goes beyond this life.

Can you imagine having a hope that is only tied to this life? And then that's all. We were made for more than that.

[17:07] And until we understand that, until man understands that, then we're going to always be dissatisfied. And so then what is he saying about the need for faith?

He's saying that faith is the substance of what we hope for. All right. So faith gives substance to that hope we were created to have and do have, but can never satisfy it apart from a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, which only comes through faith.

You understand? And so the need for faith is crucial. And that's why we live in a world surrounded by people who have no hope, who have no satisfaction.

And just when they think they're satisfied, they move on to bigger and better things, something else they don't have. I remember when I was in college, I had a friend, kind of a friend.

He was a roommate for a short while. But he was telling me he kind of grew up, you know, at a higher level economically and was always at the golf course.

[18:18] And he was describing this doctor who was a golfer and a golfer in my hometown, our hometown. He was from my hometown. And he said, you know, something crazy about that, Doc.

He said, we were out playing golf one time, and there were four of us playing. And one of the other guys playing with us had just bought a new golf bag. And so this doctor said to him, he looked at his golf bag and said, how much would you take for that?

I'll buy that from you. And he named some amount of money. To which his friend said, well, Doc, you have 50 golf bags. And he did have 50 of them at your house.

And the doc said, yeah, but I don't have one like that. Simple illustration. But it illustrates the fact that, you know, apart from a relationship with God through Christ, apart from faith that takes us beyond any kind of desires and hopes that we might find in this world or satisfaction in this world, apart from that, we'll never, ever be satisfied.

So there's the need for faith. It is the substance and gives substance to those things hoped for, hope that goes beyond this life.

[19:42] Secondly, the nature of faith. And it's interesting how the apostle Paul, I guess Tom's on security, okay?

Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, by the way. Take it from me. Did I hear Tom say something? I know he's kind of hard of hearing, but he probably heard that all the way down out here, wherever he is helping out with security.

So, Paul gives us a very interesting description of faith. Again, not so much a definition, but a description, a description of faith.

And he tells us three things about it. Kind of describes it in three ways. First of all, its substance.

Now, that kind of contradicts a lot of people in their understanding of faith.

Because most people don't think of faith being something that's substantive. Faith is not concrete. It's abstract.

[20:53] And yet, Paul said here that it is the substance. Look there again at verse 1. The substance of things hoped for.

Now, if the things hoped for are those things that not only we can enjoy in this life, but go beyond this life, then faith is what gives those things, that hope, substance.

The word substance. And, you know, this is the English word, and yet very closely related to the Greek word that is translated here. But substance, sub, it's a compound word, sub and stance.

Sub, stance. So, sub means beneath, right? Sub, like a submarine beneath the surface of the ocean. Sub flooring in a house.

Sub, it means beneath. Faith and stance. What does that mean? It's something you stand on. Substance. It's something that we stand on.

[ 22 : 00 ] It's something very solid. It is a foundational thing. And this is contrary to the thinking of most people outside the community of faith, outside of the faith.

Unbelievers. The thinking among unbelievers is don't give me this stuff about faith. They say, I want something real. Haven't you heard something like that from people?

Faith? I want something real. I want something solid. You know, like something I can touch. When you say, when a person says, I want something real, they're usually talking about something they can verify with the senses that they have.

Like something I can touch. Something I can see. Something I can taste. Or something I can feel. You know, the senses that we have.

But faith is even more real than those things. That is, the substance of faith, which is the things hoped for, is more real, actually, than anything in this world that we can touch, see, hear, taste, and using all of our senses.

[ 23 : 23 ] More real than that. And why is it more real than that? Because all the things in this life are temporary. The things that we may put our faith in, or trust in, or find our satisfaction in, in this life, that are, that are, that are, in our, in our understanding, are real, those things are just passing away.

They're here today, gone tomorrow, and we, we, we experience that every, every day. they're, they're just not lasting. They're not eternal.

But the, substance of things hoped for, the substance is a reference to things, beyond this life. That we, can have in this life, and our relationship with God, and all the blessings that come with that, but they go beyond this life.

Faith is not some, willy nilly, will of the wisp, kind of just, theoretical, kind of stuff. It's real. It's substantive.

And then second, he says, it's evidence. Look again at verse one. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and it is the evidence, of things, what?

[ 24 : 46 ] Not seen, unseen. Faith is the evidence of those things, unseen. What are the things unseen? Well, a whole litany of things. Spiritual.

Many of the promises, concerning the future. Things concerning eternity. God himself.

These are things, and many other things we could add to the list, are unseen. And so just because we can't see them, doesn't mean they're not real.

And there is, faith is, the evidence that those things are real. The evidence, of things not seen. How do you know that there is a God?

What if someone were to ask you that question? Want an answer? You know, you say you believe in God, how do you know there is one?

[ 25 : 49 ] Or how do you know the Bible is true? You say, well, faith. But don't you mean, something substantive?

There's something, there's evidence of it. Plenty of evidence that the Bible is true. In fact, I really appreciated what Abdu Murray said.

I appreciate a lot of things he said, but he made this short little comment about every time they stick a shovel in the ground in the Middle East, the Bible is proved over and over again.

In fact, even to date, with all of those who are involved in archaeology, and many of them not even believers, and archaeologists are continuing to prove the record of Scripture over and over again.

In fact, to date, not one archaeological find has proved any part of the Bible to be false. Incredible. What's that the evidence of?

[ 26 : 53 ] The Bible's true. But, but, but, faith is the evidence. I have faith. I, I, I know that there is a God.

That's part of my faith. I know the Bible is true. I know there is a heaven, as well as a hell, and many other things I know to be true.

What's the evidence of that? My faith. My faith. You may think, well, that, that doesn't sound like a very good argument. And yet, it is.

Now, don't misunderstand. My faith doesn't make those things true. You don't just have faith to make something true. But my faith is the evidence that those things are true.

Best illustration I've ever heard, and I've used this on other occasions, and with other passages, and maybe you've heard it before. Best illustration. There was a little boy, who had a kite.

[ 27 : 59 ] And so one day, he decided to fly his kite. Went up on a little hill, hoisted the kite up into the air, and it took off with the wind, and he's letting the string go out, and that kite flies, and goes higher and higher up into the air, and it was a cloudy day, until eventually the kite was hidden by the clouds.

Just kind of went into the clouds. And so there's a little boy, he's standing there with a string, and he's looking up, and the string goes up, and just disappears, and there's no kite. Not that you can see.

And about that time, this man walks by, and he looks at the little boy, and he says, what are you doing? The boy said, I'm flying a kite. And the man looked up in the air, and he said, I don't see one. How do you know it's there? And the boy says, well, I know it's there, because I feel the tug on the string. That's a very good illustration of faith.

My faith, or we can use another relationship, a relationship of faith, or another word, a relationship of my relationship with God, tells me that he's there.

[ 29 : 13 ] It's the evidence that God is real, that the Bible is true, that there is a heaven, there is a hell, and that what the Bible says about salvation is true, and on and on.

Faith, as someone has said, is the tug on the heart that tells you there is hope. A hope that goes beyond this life.

faith. And faith, again, is rooted in God's word. Romans 10, 17. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Now, that's the King James translation. Faith cometh by hearing. We use the old King's English. It comes. It cometh. It cometh by hearing.

And hearing by the word of God. That's a very interesting verse of Scripture. And when you get behind the English, you discover it's even more profound than perhaps we might think at first.

[ 30 : 20 ] Faith comes by hearing. Hearing, and that is hearing the thing heard. So, it's not just that I hear the word that that produces faith.

It's the very thing I hear that produces the faith. Not just simply the organ of hearing. But it is the thing heard. It's the thing heard that gives me faith, that produces faith in me.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing the thing heard. Which is the word of God. So, faith is substance.

It is evidence. And then it is, according to verse 3, it is understanding. Faith is understanding.

Verse 3, through faith we understand. Through faith we understand. We understand what? Well, that the worlds were framed by the word of God. So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

[ 31 : 31 ] So again, let's go to the skeptics. The skeptics say, I don't want faith. I want facts. What an ignorant thing to say.

I don't want faith. Don't give me that faith. I want facts. Well, what's the greatest fact? God. You say, well, I don't believe in God.

How can you not believe there is a God? The greatest fact is who created everything? The greatest fact is the existence of God. And that He made everything.

He's the creator. Made everything. Seen and unseen. Seen things. And the fact that we can't see them doesn't make them so.

And so faith is how we understand that God created all things. Faith is understanding.

[ 32 : 33 ] People say, we understand according to science. Don't you think that's what most people base their understanding on? Science and scientists.

You know, and so they say, well, the universe was made by the Big Bang. But what banged? If you believe in a Big Bang theory, I hope you don't because it's not what the Bible says.

But let's just say, all right, everything's just Big Bang. Boom. Well, what banged? I don't know. Scientists have different ideas about that.

But who created the thing that banged? And who created the space that it banged into? How banged? Kind of awkward. I mean, I mean, let's just think about this scientifically.

Don't you have to have some answer there? They say, well, scientists can only go so far, and that's true. But you know, science of our day, and I guess really we could argue that science in all ages, science has been skewed by anti-Christianity.

[ 33 : 57 ] or maybe we could say anti-faith because they don't understand what faith is.

And so it's not just, for me, it's not a matter of, well, I'll choose faith or I can choose science. Faith proves science as well.

And science oftentimes proves faith. Though I'm not relying upon science to prove my faith.

Science, true science, real science, over and over again proves our faith.

The faith in God and the existence of God and the Bible and many other things. So, faith, the need for it, the nature of it.

And one last thing and we'll be finished. And that is the necessity of it. Now that sounds like the need. Need is something we need, we need for ourselves.

[ 35 : 13 ] The necessity really relates to that need before God. God. The fact that we have faith is a big deal to our relationship with God.

So it's the necessity of faith and verse 6 tells us that. But without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Boy, that's says it all, doesn't it? Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Certainly, saving faith, I mean, you must have a relationship with God.

We need that, have to have that. The necessity of faith is clearly connected, it's inseparable from salvation. There is no salvation apart from faith.

For by grace, you are saved through faith, so faith and salvation, those two are connected, they're inseparable.

[ 36 : 24 ] But faith doesn't end at salvation, it goes on, doesn't it? And God says here, without faith, it's impossible to please God.

Do you want to please God? It's absolutely necessary that we please God. and that can apply, I mean, that principle can be applied in any context of the Christian's life, individually, as we live by faith, as we make decisions according to faith, it can apply to a church.

You know, God wants a church to step out in faith, take steps and we don't know the direction or don't know how we're going to afford it or whatever it may be.

There always has to be an element of faith in every decision we make in life individually as well as collectively as a church because without it, it's impossible to please God.

Impossible. Impossible to please God. The necessity of faith. Amen. Amen.