

**FOUNDATION**  
**Faith Toward God – Part One**  
**Hebrews 11:1-4, 11-13, 32-38**

**Hebrews 11:1-4, 11-13, 32-38**~ <sup>1</sup>Now faith is the <sup>(a)</sup> assurance of things hoped for, the <sup>(b)</sup> conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup>For by it the <sup>(c)</sup> people of old received their commendation. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>By faith **Abel** offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than **Cain**, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks ...<sup>11</sup> By faith **Sarah** herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. <sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth ... <sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of **Gideon**, **Barak**, **Samson**, **Jephthah**, of **David** and **Samuel** and the prophets— <sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. <sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. <sup>36</sup> Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— <sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

I. Introduction

Good morning, Brothers and Sisters. I am humble and happy to be with you this morning, sharing and teaching the Word of God. It is a humbling task to teach the Word of God that is filled with the fullness of joy.

We are continuing our series on FOUNDATION, where we are laying the basic building blocks of our Christian life ... our Forgiven Life. If you can please turn with me in your Bible to Hebrews 6, which is our main Scripture text for this series, we can read the passage together.

There are six elementary doctrines in the Christian foundation. Each one is the progression of the other. We must lay the first material before we can lay the second, and then the third, and then the fourth, and so on until we have a strong foundation where we can move toward maturity. And if you recall, these foundations do not make us mature. These foundations are needed so that we can build on top of them to lead us to maturity.

### Hebrews 6:1-3~

<sup>1</sup> Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of <sup>[1]</sup> repentance from dead works and of <sup>[2]</sup> faith toward God, <sup>2</sup> and of instruction about <sup>[3]</sup> washings, the <sup>[4]</sup> laying on of hands, the <sup>[5]</sup> resurrection of the dead, and <sup>[6]</sup> eternal judgment.  
<sup>3</sup> And this we will do if God permits.

## II. Faith After Repentance

The first thing we lay is “Repentance From Dead Works”. We spent two weeks talking about that. Once we repented (that is the first step), we need to add on to our repentance “Faith Toward God.” Please note that faith comes after repentance.

There are many people of certain Calvinistic persuasion who teach that we have to have faith first before we can repent. They teach that somehow God first has to give us a measure of faith unilaterally (that is that God unconditionally gives us faith first regardless of what we do ... we did not deserve it, we did not do anything to obtain ... God just freely give to us faith). And then because we have this faith from God, we will repent. It is a fatalistic view. But that is not what the Bible teaches.

This teaching is wrong on two levels.

1. First, the Bible teaches that Faith comes after Repentance.

The Bible does not teach that faith comes before repentance. Faith always comes after repentance. Our faith is build on top of our repentance. That is what Jesus taught in Mark 1.

**Mark 1:14-15~** <sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; <sup>(a)</sup> repent and <sup>(b)</sup> believe [have faith] in the gospel.”

Jesus says that to enter the Kingdom of God, we must first repent. And once we repented, we must then believe, that is have faith in the gospel. You see, it is not enough just to repent. We must also believe ... we must also have faith on top of repentance.

The Apostle Paul taught the same thing, faith after repentance. Speaking to the Jewish Believing Elders of Ephesus, Paul told them ...

**Acts 20:20-21~** <sup>20</sup> how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> testifying both to

Jews and to Greeks of <sup>(a)</sup>repentance toward God and of <sup>(b)</sup>faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is this important? Why am I spending time talking about this? Why must we understand that faith comes after repentance?

You see, repentance is turning away from something ... “repentance from dead works”. And faith is turning towards something (or someone) ... “faith toward God”. Before we can turn toward something or someone, we must first turn away from something or someone.

To make it simple, the foundation of the Forgiven Life is first turning away from our old life of trusting in something (most likely it is trusting in ourselves), that is repentance. And now we turn to a new life of trusting in God, that is faith.

Brothers and Sisters, it is not good enough to only repent, turning away from something. We cannot sustain that repentance if we do not have something (or someone) to turn toward. We must also have faith, turning toward something (or someone) ... more specifically, turning toward God.

When I was pastoring in a Lutheran Church many years ago, one of my church members decided to fast from surfing the internet during Lent season. He said he was wasting so much time just surfing the internet and accomplishing nothing. So he decided to stop surfing the internet during the 40 days of Lent. He only lasted a few short days before he once again started to surf the web. Why? He tried to turn away something negative but left a void that was not filled with something positive. So with that void, that emptiness, it was just a matter of time before he went back to surfing the web to fill that void.

So when I talked to him, I gave him a 40-day Bible reading and devotional for him to read and reflect. So instead of surfing the web, turning away from something negative, you fill that void with something positive, reading and reflecting on the devotional.

Many of us have made a commitment to turn away from negative things in our life ... sins that way us down, anger that leaves us frustrated, and such behaviors that are unbecoming of being called a Christian. And that is great. But it won't last. We have to turn to something positive. We have to replace the negative with the positive. We have to repent from dead works and replace it with faith toward God. This is why faith comes after repentance.

2. Second, the Bible teaches that faith is a matter of Choice.

Some people think that either we are blessed with faith or we are not blessed with faith. Since God gives us faith unilateral without any contribution on our part, as some people teach, than some of us are NOT fortunate enough to have faith while others are granted a measure of faith.

We hear statements such as, “I just don’t have enough faith for that.” Or “God has not blessed me with enough faith to do such and such.”

That is just not true. The honest truth is that each and every one of us here has faith. And we have as much faith as the next person. We all believe in things we do not see. We all believe in things without knowing the future or outcome. We all have faith. The problem is not that we do not have faith. The problem is that our faith rests in something else or someone else instead of resting and directing toward God.

- a. Some of us put our faith in People instead of God.

It is easy to put faith in people who we can see than in God who we cannot see. We turn to people instead of turning to God. However, there is a warning to those who put their trust in people.

**Jeremiah 17:5~<sup>5</sup>** Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD.

We have more confidence in other people to make us happy or to render us help than God. We put our faith and trust in people to give us significance.

This is why we go seeking a mate or a life partner. This is why we spend so much time, energy, and money buying friendship. We trust that people help us find fulfillment. Now don’t get me wrong. There is nothing inherently sinful in trying to look for a life partner. God created us to be fruitful and multiply within the boundary of marriage. Our life is fulfilled and happy in marriage when our heart is already full and happy with God. The problem is when our heart is void of God and we are trying to fill that emptiness with things that only God can fill. That is a formula for misery and restlessness.

There was a time in college when I was a baby Christian. I stood on the corner of the walkway between the library and Cullen Building at the University of Houston. I looked across the sea of people walking by and I said, “So many women, so little time.” I literary said that out loud. In fact, I said it several times throughout my college years. I was looking for someone to fill this void that only God could fill. And I was miserable, always disappointed because people let me down. In fact, I let myself down.

But the Bible says ...

**Romans 3:4~<sup>4</sup>** ... let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar ... (NASB)

And it also says ...

**1 John 5:9~** <sup>9</sup> If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater ...

If our faith is in people, they will eventually let us down. We get hurt. We get disillusion. And then we blame God. “Why did God do this to me?” we cry out. Let’s be real and honest, God did not do anything to me. I did it to myself. I put my faith in the wrong place. I put my faith toward people instead of faith toward God.

Jesus has the right perspective. In John 2:23-24, the Bible says that ...

**John 2:23-24~** <sup>23</sup> Now when he [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people <sup>25</sup> and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Jesus does not believe in people’s believing. Jesus does not have faith in people’s faith because he knows what is in man. Jesus entrusts himself to the Father.

Moreover, we even put more faith and trust in ourselves than in God. “Trust in yourself,” we often hear. “Believe in yourself!” goes the exhortation. That kind of teaching is prevalent in our time. And you know what, we buy it lock, stock, and barrel.

It was Brad Henry who said, “Believe in yourself, and the rest will fall into place. Have faith in your own abilities, work hard, and there is nothing you cannot accomplish.”

“You can do it!” goes the cry. You have the power and the ability. Have faith in yourselves.

And I think that is why we have trouble praying. It is not that we do not trust God. It is that we trust ourselves more. We can fix our own problems if we put our mind to it. We can do anything we want.

So really, we all have faith, do we not? We have faith in people. We have faith in ourselves. But that always leaves us disappointed because people will always disappoint us. Why? People can help here and there, but they do not have the ability to do all things. Not like God.

So after repentance, we now need to shift our faith from man to God. That is the next foundation that we need to lay.

- b. Some of us put our faith in Military or Government instead of God.

The Bible tells us that people do this.

**Psalm 20:7~<sup>7</sup>** Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

I know some Christians who have more confidence in the government's ability to make the world a better and just place than in God's ability. They think that if we can make social justice laws that can make our country prosperous.

Again, don't get me wrong. I am grateful to live a free country where I can express my faith. Every time I return to the States from visiting other countries, I am always grateful to be home. But I have no disillusion that the country will always protect my rights and freedom. I do not rely on the government to take care of the poor, widows, and orphans.

You know what? Let me get on another little diatribe of mine here (I got a lot of them). I was talking to an old church member of mine about government and politics. He leans toward socialism where the government confiscates my "wealth", if you will, to distribute it to others who are less fortunate. I objected to that because I work hard. I have three or four jobs that I work day and night. And why do I work so hard? So I could take care of others.<sup>1</sup> But my old church member objects because he thinks that it is the government's responsibility to take care of people and to take care of the poor. And he could not understand why I do not support socialism so that the poor can be taken care of.

So I asked him, "Let me ask you this question, 'Do you give to the poor regularly, like monthly?'" "There are a lot of great ministries in Houston that take care of the homeless and hungry. Do you support those ministries?"

He said, "No."

You see, I do. And my wife does. We give monthly to ministries so that we can take care of the poor. It is NOT the government's job to take care of the poor and needy. No, that is my job and that is your job. God has never commissioned the government to take care of the needy. God commissions the government to protect her citizens from evil.<sup>2</sup> And God commissions us, His Church, to feed the poor and cloth the naked. That is our job, so let's not be relegated to someone else.

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<sup>1</sup> **Ephesians 4:28~<sup>28</sup>** ... but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

<sup>2</sup> **Romans 13:1-4~<sup>1</sup>** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, <sup>4</sup> for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

I do not rely on the government to take care of the needy. I do not rely on the government to take care of me in the future.

Our faith must be in God instead of government.

Faith is really awesome. God chooses faith as that means to commend us. Why? It is because faith is accessible to everybody. Each and every one of us can have faith. It does not depend on our gender or our age or our intellect or anything else. Faith is a choice. And because of that, we all are on the same playing field. We either choose to have faith toward God or have faith toward something or someone else.

Faith is a choice.

### III. The Meaning of Faith

Before we go any further, let us quickly define what faith is so that we are on the same page. The best place to understand the meaning of faith is found in Hebrews 11, known as the “Faith Chapter”.

**Hebrews 11:1-2**~ <sup>1</sup>Now faith is the <sup>(a)</sup> assurance of things hoped for, the <sup>(b)</sup> conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup>For by it the <sup>(c)</sup> people of old received their commendation.

There are three things I want to note about faith. And I want to go over this quickly.

1. First, faith is a Certainty.

**Hebrews 11:1**~ <sup>1</sup>Now faith is the <sup>(a)</sup> assurance of things hoped for ...

“Faith is absolutely certain that what it believes is true and that what it expects will come.”<sup>3</sup> We are certain of things we hope for. It is not a hope in a sense of wishful thinking or longing. It is a hope that looks forward with complete assurance. And as such, the Christian hope dictates all of our conduct.

We are certain of God. We are assured of God. We know that the things God promises He will bring to pass.

2. Second, faith is a Conviction.

**Hebrews 11:1**~ <sup>1</sup>Now faith is the ... <sup>(b)</sup> conviction of things not seen.

Faith is a conviction, and confidence in God, even though we do not see things. But what are we convicted about God? We are convicted that God is faithful to His words ... to His promises.

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<sup>3</sup> William Barclay, *The Daily Bible Study*, “Hebrews”.

**Hebrews 11:11~** <sup>11</sup> By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

It is a judgment that we make of God, specifically that He is trustworthy. We are confident that if God says something, He will do it.

Our conviction is what guides us in good times and in hard times. Even though we do not see things with our natural eyes, we follow our conviction because of our confidence in God.

3. Third, faith is a Commendation.

**Hebrews 11:2~** <sup>2</sup> For by it the <sup>(c)</sup> people of old received their commendation.

In short, faith commends us to God. We cannot please God without faith.

**Hebrews 11:6~** <sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him ...

We cannot ever please God if we do not have faith. Why? Look at what the author of Hebrews says.

**Hebrews 11:6~** <sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe [faith] that he <sup>(a)</sup>exists [certainty] and that he <sup>(b)</sup>rewards [conviction] those who seek him.

Faith is everything. We receive salvation by faith. We receive the Holy Spirit by faith. We receive God's blessings and promises by faith. We even receive our answers to prayer by faith.

**James 1:6-7~** <sup>6</sup> But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord (NASB)

#### IV. Conclusion

That is the definition of faith. It is:

1. It is a Certainty in God.

We are assured that God is who He says He is. We are assured that God will bring about what He says.

2. It is a Conviction about God.

It is a belief that God is faithful to His word and promises even though we do not see them yet.

3. It is the means by which we are Commended by God.

And our certainty and conviction in God is what pleases God.

Faith, in a sense, is not difficult to understand. Faith is a transfer of our trust and allegiance of people and organization to trust and allegiance to God.

Next week, we will look at the Presence of Faith and how to Increase our Faith.

#### V. The Blessing

**Presider:** May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. May the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be unto you.

**Congregation:** And also to you.