



Sermon-Based Study Guide
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Sermon Title: More Than Meets the Eye

Sermon Text: Hebrews 11.1-6

Related Texts: Genesis 4.4; Genesis 5.21-24;

I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

Faith has to do with trust. Other than faith in God, in what do you put your trust?

II. Introduction

The author of Hebrews has delved into the deep, rich theological expositions of the divine nature and unique activity of Jesus. Out of that has come an exhortation to faithfully draw near to God, to hold on to hope, and to encourage one another in the face of adversity. The author recalls the faithfulness of the Hebrew Christians and gently coaxes them to remain faithful even when they experience difficulty, persecution, frustration, and uncertainty. The encouragement is to be people of faith. What is faith? How does one live by faith? Let's find out what the preacher/author has to say about these things.

III. Study the Text – Read Hebrews 11.1-6

- 1) Before looking at chapter 11, turn to Hebrews 10.19-25. According to verses 22 through 25 what are the Hebrew Christians to do since - as verses 19 through 21 point out - "we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place (God's presence)... and "since we have a great high priest..." Notice also verses 35-39 and its call to live by faith.
- 2) Verse 1 takes gets right to the point - "Now faith is..." The author uses two key words to define faith:

The first is the Greek word "hypostasis" which in the NIV is translated "being sure" (of what we hope for). Literally the word translates "hypo" = under and "stasis" = foundation or basis. Faith is something that is solidly foundational. We could say that faith is the substance or assurance (as some translations put it) of that which is hoped for.

The second is "elechos" a word that means "something tested for validity or reality" and therefore is translated as "evidence" or "certainty".

So, faith is both having a solid footing or assurance and having certainty of something. However, in both cases the author relates these to what we hope for and what we do not see. What is it Christians hope for and do not see? What gives you the assurance and certainty that these are real?

Note: The Hebrews author lays out the meaning of faith - assurance and certainty of things we hope for and things we do not see. What are the things we do not see? God is one. God's power that called creation into being and sustains it, God's presence, God's governance in the world, the activity of God's Spirit who convicts people of their need for Jesus, the hope of heaven and an everlasting existence in the presence of God, that God's purposes are being accomplished even when followers of Jesus suffer, and much more. Faith looks into the invisible Being of God and sees God. Faith looks into the invisible activity of God and sees that power and action. Faith is the means of knowing with certainty that God is.

- 4) Faith and knowing come together in verse 3. Epistemology is the study of how we know what we know and of the structure and formation of knowledge. What does the Hebrews author say about faith and knowing in this verse? How does having assurance and certainty about God's power enable a person to understand (perceive or imagine) that the universe was formed (out of nothing) by God's command?
- 5) The author turns to two examples of faith - Abel and Enoch in verses 4 and 5. Abel's sacrifice (Genesis 4.4) is acceptable to God because of his confidence (faith) in God's graciousness versus the competitiveness behind Cain's offering. Look at Genesis 5.21-24. Note the reference to Enoch "walking with God." Do you agree that this is a picture of a person who is "sensitive to the mind of God and obedient to the will of God" as one commentator has cited?
- 6) Verse 6 sums up the exhortation of the Hebrews author. Why is it impossible to please God apart from faith? How does God reward those who honestly seek him?

IV. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

- 1) Reflect on the definition of faith given in verse 1. How would you evaluate your level of faith by this definition?
- 2) Are there things that challenge your faith, particularly your confidence that things unseen - God, God's power, God's rule over the world - are real? What steps could you take to gain a deeper assurance and certainty about these things?
- 3) How can you follow the example of Enoch who "walked closely with the Lord" throughout his life? In particular, how can you be more sensitive and obedient to the mind and will of God?

Faith is not something that one conjures up by sheer will. It's almost the opposite of that. Faith is more like letting go of the effort to prove and identify the things hoped for and that are unseen. We can't make the invisible things related to God visible by applying the laws or techniques of science to them. However, we can look at those things that provide a solid foundation for faith - particularly the person of Jesus who reveals God's existence, God's power, God's purposes, God's rule over the universe, and God's care for us even when we experience difficulties in life. Then from that solid foundation we can see beyond - with the eyes of faith - to those realities for which we hope and long, and do so with assurance and certainty that they are real. That's why we cannot please God, be obedient to God's will, and give our lives in gratitude to God apart from faith that God exists and is in control.