

I want to share some things about faith that I have seen more clearly recently. It has helped me a lot and I believe it will help you too.

In Hebrews 11 God gives us examples of people, who were just like us, but they had this one, exceptional quality, called faith. Faith pleases God and in a very real sense, it is the key to everything! Everyone of these people were different, and they all did different things. Abraham left his home. Noah built an ark. Moses refused the honor of being Pharaoh's daughter. Joshua defeated Jericho. Some were tortured and put to death. But they all did what they did with faith in God. God is not asking us to all be alike, or to do the same thing or to walk the same path. He IS asking us to all to live by faith.

But their faith in God had a certain quality to it that I think we often miss. And because we miss it, we often think we are living by faith when we really are not. Faith IS CONFIDENCE in God! Hebrews 11:1 in the NIV says "Faith is CONFIDENCE in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 10:35 "Do not throw away your CONFIDENCE". That is saying do not throw away your faith!! Hebrews 3:14 "For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our ORIGINAL CONFIDENCE firm to the end".

But there is one additional crucial element of faith that we MUST understand! We see that in Hebrews 3:6 "We are Christ's house, if we hold fast our confidence AND THE BOAST OF OUR HOPE, firm until the end". Faith is a kind of audacious, bold confidence in God that rises to the level of boasting in God (and boasting in our hope). Paul said the same thing! Therefore since we have been justified by faith (we have peace with God) and ... "We boast in the hope of the glory of God".

Why do we love Romans 8 so much? Because it is filled with this kind of joyous boasting in God. “If God is for us, who can be against us!” “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”.... “I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We love that so much because it expresses big confidence in God that rises even to boasting in it!

We love Luther’s hymn A Mighty Fortress because most of it is a boast in God and in our hope in God! “And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us we will not fear for God has willed his truth to triumph through us”. “Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. The body they may kill. God’s truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever” We like that because those lines express real faith. Real faith has this kind of big confidence, to it.

Josh Moody wrote a book titled: “Boasting: When we boast right, we live right, and we bear much fruit”. He said, “Paul used the word boast as an audacious and brave, confident and deliberate act of rejoicing. It is something active, not passive, and it is something that may appear even outlandish, audacious, and certainly a kind of rejoicing with brave courage”.

Sometimes we say, “Oh yes, “I know God is there, and somehow everything is going to work out. I guess God is good. Maybe someday things will get better.” But there is no joyful confidence,

there is no boast in it. Sometimes we express the attitudes of a person to whom these things have no real value.

A person fits in very well with the world today if they say, "I'm not the kind of person who wears my faith on my sleeve. Or my faith is a private matter. But something is wrong when we are not boasting in God. That is not the way real faith talks and lives.

Listen to these statements of faith and see if you see the confidence, even the boasting in these verses....

Psalm 18. By my God I can leap over a wall. By you I can run against a troop. Or Psalm 3:6 I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Or this from Daniel, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

And this one from our Hebrews 11 - "Moses, when he had grown up, REFUSED to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He was offered the glory and treasure of Egypt and he turned it down! He said I've got something way better than that to live for!! "He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward".

Faith sees God as really big and great and good and talks that way and walks that way. (Are you talking this way? You get it from the Bible!!) We cannot say I have faith in God, but talk all the time about how bad off we have it, like we have nothing to live for, or nothing to rejoice in!

Faith is looking at the things that are unseen, and eternal. And living and talking in such a way that our lives are like a megaphone saying these unseen things are what matters! We are looking ahead to the reward, and we regard it as of greater value than all the treasures of this world!! We boast in our hope of glory!

Faith boasts in the Lord's provision: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing!". Faith boasts in the Lord's presence. "Even when I walk through a valley of darkness and death, I will not be afraid because you are with me". Faith boasts in the Lord's protection! "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my stronghold in whom I take refuge, my shield, the glory of my salvation, and my high tower."

Anything less than that is not Biblical faith. Our relationship with God must have this element of robust, confident faith. Many times we think we have faith, when we are only nibbling around the edges of faith. Faith is a wholehearted, buying into God.

Sometimes we believe God through our tears. Sometimes we feel we are barely holding on. I get that. But we can't live there all the time. Faith has to move on to this bold robust attitude of confidence in God. I am not sure that faith is real faith till it becomes this kind of boast in God. Faith is believing and reveling in the things God has given us and the glorious things that are ahead of us.

Some people say I wish I had that kind of faith but I just don't, and so that's that. Francis Schaeffer defined faith as "ceasing to call God a liar". It is simply beginning to really take God at his word and hanging your life, and your future, your emotions, and how you talk, and walk on what God says. Sure it is a fight, but it is possible!!

Bold, confident assertions of faith make the Christian life much easier, and much more joyful, than half-hearted, lame, or lukewarm kinds of faith in which we sometimes tend to wallow. One kind of faith is like a low level fever which we are not sure if we have or not. The other is like a raging fire that you absolutely know you have.

If you have ever played red rover you know something about what I am talking about. Everybody lines up in a row and hold hands and say red rover send _____ right over. If you break through the line you get to take one of that team back to your team. If you don't break through that line, you are captured and stay with the other team. If they say red rover send _____ right over, and you saunter up to that line with hesitation and meekly press into that row of locked arms you are not going to break through that line. But if you make a bold and confident dash toward that barrier, it usually is relatively easy to break through. It is better to live with all-out faith!

This was the kind of faith Missionary CT Studd expressed, "Is there a wall in our path? By our God we will leap over it! Are there lions and scorpions in our way? We will trample them under our feet! Does a mountain bar our progress? Saying, 'Be thou cast into the sea,' we will march on. Soldiers of Jesus! Never surrender!"

"Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven, without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell, when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle." ~ "We will live and we will die for Him,

and we will do it with His joy unspeakable singing aloud in our hearts.”

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Faith is an attitude of your heart. Romans 10:10 “It is with the heart that you believe and are justified”. Adolf Saphire said “(Faith) is a radical and essential disposition of heart towards God that consists at all times of a firm confidence of unseen and future realities. Faith beholds spiritual realities and future blessings and so grasps and cherishes them as to prefer them to things visible and to make them the object and joy of life.”

The root of faith is this inward, confidence in God. The fruit of faith is acting on that confidence. Faith is not shrinking back but moving toward God and what God says, what God values and what he rewards. A faithful life flows out from faith in the heart!!

So faith not only “talks”, but it obeys God with a complete abandonment because we believe that God is really there and that he really is a rewarder of those who seek him. That’s what we see in Hebrews 11!

The life of faith often looks bold and audacious to the human way of thinking. At life group David Bryan call Hebrews 11 “The illogical and unreasonable life of the faithful”. Why? Because robust confidence in God leads to living a life FOR God and unseen riches and glory. And nobody can quite understand that.

The Hebrews once had that kind of faith. 10:34 “Remember those earlier days....you joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. When you can joyfully accept loss of property

you've got real faith. The author is trying to rekindle that again! So he puts before them people who had this robust kind of faith!

God told Noah to build a gigantic boat because he was going to judge the world with a flood. And "Noah did just as God commanded him to do." He built a gigantic ark on dry land hundreds miles from any body of water! Why? Because he was THAT CONFIDENT in what God said. Verse 7 "BY FAITH Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household."

8 "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going." That had to look crazy or foolish to leave everything and everybody you ever knew and go live somewhere God said was for you. But Abraham was so CONFIDENT that what God had for him was better, that he left the earthly land he owned. God said, "Go". And Abraham said, "Of course".

Faith believes the kingdom of God and the new Heaven and new earth are real and we live for God's kingdom and look to the glory and the reward of that. Faith seeks first the kingdom of God!!!

Abraham and Sarah were childless and old. God appeared to Abraham and took him outside and told him to look up at the stars and said "So shall your offspring be". "And he believed God!"

Sarah thought the promise of a child in her old age was so outlandish that she laughed. Yet she believed God and "By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised." "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.”

Verse 35 “There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection”. Their attitude was, “You want to saw me in two? Or cut my head off? Go ahead, and I’ll rise from the dead to a better life with a better body and a better reward!”

****Here is why this kind of faith really matters: God is pleased with this robust kind of faith. When God sees that the unseen things he has promised matter to us and we are living for these things! GOD SAYS I AM NOT ASHAMED TO BE CALLED THEIR GOD!**

Verse 13 “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. For people who (say such things) make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

If you think all that God has prepared for you is worth living for, and worth boasting in, worth being excited about, then God is not ashamed to be called your God! What a powerful motivation!!

Sam Storms puts it this way: “A life of faith makes God proud of you. It is as if God looks at the hearts of men and women and he sees you boldly, confidently trusting him and he says to the angels, look at that man, look at that woman, her husband deserted her, and she doesn’t have as much resources as she used to, and yet she is

CONFIDENT IN ME. Her eyes are on me and the plans I have for her. She is overflowing with hope because she believes the things I have promised her are of great value. I am not ashamed to be called her God.”

By faith we look to Christ crucified and say he loved me and gave himself for me. By faith we believe that God poured out his love into our hearts. By faith we believe that we stand in grace, not in condemnation. By faith we receive the Holy Spirit, and living waters flowing out from our inner most being. By faith we are continually aware that Christ lives in us, that we have continual access directly to God. By faith we know that all things work together for our good. By faith we expect a massive weight of future glory with Christ. All these are grasped by faith. We don't believe these things timidly, we boast in them.

***** Two applications:

First: What is your problem or need today? Come up with the biggest boast in God that you can about your current situation. Go find it in the Bible. There is one there that you can make your own. Start with Psalm 23. This isn't positive thinking it is trusting in something God has said to us.

Second: Practice boasting in God and all he HAS given us in Jesus, (forgiveness, access, grace, love..) And in all the glory that is ahead of us because of Jesus. Let this become the air you breathe, your frame of mind and attitude of heart. Example Edna May. Asked Cindy how are you doing? “Great”. She replied immediately, “Well, Of course, why wouldn't you be doing great. He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” God's promises were that ingrained in her heart and that ready on her lips.

Let us ask God to deliver us from watered down faith and live with a Biblical robust confidence in God!