

## Our Blessing is Our Faith!

Heb 11:1 <sup>1</sup>Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Faith is being sure of things hoped for. Our greatest hope is that of eternal life with God.

Are you looking for God to bless you because of your faith? Or do you see that your blessing *is* your faith?

When are you most apt to think about God? When are you most ready to let God be in control? Let's think about those things for a little while. Are we thinking about God when we are going through our regular daily rituals? Do we think about Him when everything is going really well? When we get a raise, do we think it came from God? When we drive home safely, do we think God protected us during the trip? I think that we don't think about God at these times. I think that we think we are the ones in control and since we are the ones in control, when we go through these things, we did it – not God.

So when do we think about God? Apparently, when things happen that are outside of our control. When someone else is landing the plane. When the doctor performs successful surgery. When a jury comes back with a good verdict. In these cases, we would find ourselves thanking God. It's the way of human nature. When we are in control, we take the credit, when we are not in control, we go to God.

God knows this. It's why we don't live in heaven on earth. If everything went well for us all the time, we would start to think that it was because all the great things we have done. We would quickly forget about God. It happened in the past to the Israelites and it happens to us today. In the Old Testament, we read of God promising the Israelites all these wonderful things – *IF* they held to God's laws. Moses was very concerned that when they received the Promised Land, they would forget all the things God had done for them. He was right. The Israelites showed that they were human by living day-to-day outside their control for forty years and trusting God to get them through the desert. However, once they received the Promised Land, they went back to human things, taking credit where none was due. They quickly forgot what God did for them. In His great wisdom, God sent other nations to overtake them and only then did they return to Him, asking for forgiveness. When things were going well, they forgot about God, when things were tough, they returned to Him. Such is the way of human nature. We only think about God when bad things are happening and we need help, when things are out of our control. We forget about Him when things are going well and we "have it all under control" ourselves.

This is where faith comes in. Are we living in faith of God's promises every day, regardless of whether things are going well or going poorly? Or is our faith such that we expect God to give us answers immediately? Do we expect God's answers to be what *we* want?

There are those who would teach that if we have enough faith, we can receive all that we want – but is that biblical? These teachers will point to passages that say that we can do miraculous things if we have enough faith, or even a little faith, but are they reading those passages correctly? I'll simply point out that in almost all those passages that people use to show that we just need to have faith to receive what we want, it invariably shows that these things need to be in the will of God and that it is not IN faith that God provides, but WITH faith. The difference is that we can have great faith IN a lot of things – I can really believe that I will be healed, be blessed with riches, gain fame and fortune. But that isn't what the Bible is talking about. It is talking about living life WITH faith. By living WITH faith, we are not looking for great things as a reward for our faith but we are looking at today as the right time to display our faith. In other words, God doesn't want to bless us because we had faith. He wants our blessing to be our faith.

Here's the message today: Our Blessing is Our Faith!

Rewards of faith are not always immediate but can “lay hold of blessings at a great distance”. That distance is time. Just like Jesus could heal the Centurion's servant from anywhere, so he can bless us from anywhere and at any time. We need not get caught up in when we get our blessings. If we are so caught up in getting our blessings in this world, then we need to re-examine our faith – are we doing things as the spirit moves us, because we love God, because we are driven to do these things? Or are we doing things because we are looking for a payoff? Is our faith to receive a blessing or is our faith our blessing?

Faith is an amazing thing. There are things that we would never be able to accomplish without it. It is not a reward or a consequence of our faith that accomplishes these things. It is simply the definition of faith. When we do things in faith, we step out farther than we know we are capable of. Abraham went to places that he never intended - in faith.

Heb 11:8

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

He had no idea what was going to happen, but because he stepped out in faith, great things did happen. These things did not happen because he was rewarded for his faith. They happened because he had faith! His faith was his blessing!

Heb 11:7

<sup>7</sup>By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.

Noah built an ark without having a clue how God was going to use that. In the same way, we need to go past what makes sense to us and do things in Christ's power and not our own. If we only do things that we know we can do, then where is the faith? But when we do things that we have no idea where they will lead, but instead we are simply doing the things that God has called upon us to do, then it doesn't matter where it leads. We don't need to think about what the outcome is going to be because it is in God's hands that we are placing our future. What happens when we step out in faith? As far as we're concerned, it doesn't matter! God's will is being done! Our faith is our blessing!

### 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

<sup>11</sup>For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

<sup>12</sup>If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup>his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. <sup>15</sup>If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

I firmly believe that the deeds of gold, silver and jewels that survive the fire are those things that we have done, or will do, that can only be done by Jesus. Sure we do it, but we do it in faith recognizing that we really cannot accomplish whatever that thing is. We simply stepped out and performed acts of faith without knowing what the outcome would be or that we could even do it. It might look successful from the world's point of view (like we made a million dollars) or it might look unsuccessful from the world's point of view (like we have a church of 20 people). What it looks like to the world is unimportant. What we have done was step out in faith and left it to God to do His work through that. Our blessing is not what the world thinks, but what God thinks. If I am correct that the jewels, gold and silver that we are laying are made up of those things we did in faith, then the outcome of those actions are unimportant. It is our faith that is our blessing and it is our faith that builds our rewards in heaven.

After reading all the wonderful things that these great men did in Hebrews 11 and recognizing that it was in faith that all these things occurred, it is important to show how the writer of Hebrews leaves us:

### Heb 11:39

<sup>39</sup>These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.

He tells us that they all were commended for their faith, that they lived in great faith but yet they did not receive what had been promised. What kind of God makes promises and then after having His greatest followers perform their half of the bargain, doesn't fulfill His half of the bargain? Not one that was made by man's imagination, that's for sure. If man made up this God and this Bible, these men would all have ended up with great wealth and we would have seen the fulfillment of every promise that this god had made. No. That's not the True God. The True God, the God of the Bible, has a different plan for His people.

### Hebrews 10:35-39

<sup>35</sup>So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. <sup>36</sup>You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. <sup>37</sup>For in just a very little while,

"He who is coming will come and will not delay.

<sup>38</sup>But my righteous one<sup>[f]</sup> will live by faith.

And if he shrinks back,

I will not be pleased with him."<sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved. God will bless us in Heaven. There are many who will say that Heaven is blessing enough, and that is true. But we also know that there is so much more that God has planned for us in Heaven. However, on this earth, our blessings are not like those that we see other receiving for things that they might have done. Our blessings are not monetary or fame or happiness. Our blessing is our Faith!