

## Sermon

By Faith  
Hebrews 11:1-16

Faith is a popular topic – but what is it?

Some talk as if faith itself is what matters. This misleading teaching, called fideism, is not what the Bible teaches.

Faith is always *in* something

Faith in the wrong thing is harmful.

So what is faith?

Faith is genuine assurance and conviction

Hebrews 11:1-2 begins to give an answer: “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

True faith has Christ as its object.

This assurance and conviction is a gift of God worked by the Holy Spirit.

But faith is also action

Faith is not merely knowledge.

Faith always produces fruit. Living faith always turns into action.

We’re not saying that actions are faith or that we are in any way saved by what we do. Just the opposite. Faith is a condition for good works. We cannot do any truly good works before God without faith.

Hebrews 11:6 “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

Faith expresses itself – it results in us drawing near to God who first came to us. It causes us to seek him who has already found us.

Some examples: Abel and Cain, Noah, Abraham & Sarah.

None of their actions would have meant anything without God’s gift of faith.

Faith trusts in God’s promises

Our forebears believed God’s promises and trusted him to fulfill them. But many of them died before seeing the promises fulfilled. They knew they would be fulfilled in later time, but they did not see them with their own eyes.

They lived as strangers and exiles.

But they knew that God was faithful and that the promise would be kept.

Like the patriarchs, we live in faith, but as strangers and exiles.

We have been given the gift of faith and God has made great promises to us.

Some of these promises we see fulfilled, but some remain before us.

And this is why God shows us this gallery of the faithful. These great saints of old were not perfect people. They had their struggles and doubts and failures just as we do. There was sin to forgive and problems to overcome, but they believed in the God who gave Himself for them. They had faith and so they were commended.

What is the difference between them and us?

We have God’s gift of faith.

We have seen God’s faithfulness.

Our needs have been provided.

But unlike them, we have seen the fulfillment of God's greatest promise: Christ.