

# ALWAYS HAVE FAITH

Don't give up.  
Keep the faith.  
Hold on.  
Don't stop be –

## Journey

Don't stop believing.  
Always have faith.

That's a Christian rule, right?  
Always have faith.

I think it is.

**Hebrews 11.6:** Without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Without faith it is impossible to please God.  
That's what the Book of Hebrews tells us.  
In fact, that's what the entire Bible tells us.  
And it would be difficult to overstate how essential faith is for living the Christian life.

So, guys I have a confession.  
Don't get excited.  
I'm not going to tell you about some deep, dark sin  
that I have committed.

It's about this week's talk:  
I failed this week.

Every week so far I have been able to tell you  
 what the rule is,  
 why it's important that we follow it, and  
 when it's ok to break it –  
 all in one lecture.

I tried to find a way to do that with today's topic:  
 Always have faith.  
 But I just couldn't do it.

Faith is such a big topic  
 and what I want to tell you about when not to have faith –  
 I know that sounds crazy –  
 saying there are times when we should not have faith –  
 but what I need to tell you about when not to have faith  
 is so involved if I'm going to parse it just right,  
 that I've had to make this topic a two-parter.

This week we're going to look at  
 what faith is and  
 why we always need to have faith.

Next week I'll tell you when not to have faith.

## **Why We Should Always Have Faith**

### **1. It is faith that allows us to receive the gift of salvation that brings us into a right relationship with God.**

**Ephesians 2.8-9:** For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith**—and this  
 is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can  
 boast.

Grace in this verse is God's merciful act of sending his Son Jesus into the  
 world to die for our sins.

And Paul says we are saved by this grace –  
 that is, salvation is achieved by what God has done for us.

And to make certain we get it,  
 he states the same truth in the negative.  
 Salvation is “not by works” –  
 it’s not secured by what we have done for God.

So – people are saved by grace.  
 Jesus died for everyone.  
 So, now we’re all saved?  
 No, salvation must be received.

And how do we receive the gift of salvation?  
 Paul tells us: it’s “through faith.”

Salvation is made **possible** because of what God has done for us in Jesus.  
 Salvation is received **personally** through our faith in what God has done.

**Romans 3.23-26:** Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven **through their faith in him.**

The same truths we saw in Ephesians 2,  
 we see again in this passage.

All have sinned.  
 All are far away from God.  
 All need to be saved.

And God offers us his saving grace as a free gift  
 by what he accomplished through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

And how do people receive this forgiveness?  
 Verse 26: “through their faith in him.”

Is faith important?  
 It’s more than important.  
 It is essential for receiving the gift of salvation made possible  
 by the death of Jesus.

The biggest problem of your life –  
 how can you be reconciled to a holy God –  
 the solution comes through faith.

So, faith is crucial for beginning the Christian life.

**2. And faith is also critical for living a Christian life  
 after we have accepted Jesus as our Savior.**

Paul writes about his own life and ministry

**2 Corinthians 5.7:** For we live by faith, not by sight.

No one did more  
 than Paul in spreading the faith in the first century.  
 And no one overcame more obstacles  
 or endured more suffering  
 than Paul did in taking the Gospel to the world.

How did he do it?

Paul says,

it's because we walk by faith.

We believe what others can't see.

We know there is a reality that is greater than our senses can perceive.

We travel through this world

not trusting in what appears to be true,

but always trusting in the goodness and the power of God.

And it's that way for everyone who wants to live  
 a godly, productive life that honors Jesus.

Paul wrote the Thessalonians

**1 Thessalonians 1.3:** We always thank God for all of you and continually mention  
 you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work  
 produced by faith ...

Faith creates a people who do the work of God.  
 It changes our lives and our priorities;  
 it causes us to serve God and others; and  
 it empowers us to keep going when we are opposed and  
 when we become weary.

**And**

### **3. Faith opens us to the work God wants to do in our lives.**

In Mark chapter 5,  
 we read about a woman who had been bleeding for years.  
 She believes that if she can get to Jesus and just touch him,  
 she will be healed.  
 She makes her way to him through a large crowd  
 touches his garment, and  
 immediately is made whole.

**Mark 5.32-34:** Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Why is she healed?  
 Her faith allowed the power of God to come into her life  
 and make her whole.

Two blind men cry out for Jesus to heal them.

**Matthew 9.29-30:** Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you”; and their sight was restored.

Same thing.  
 Faith allowed the work and the blessing of God  
 to come into their lives.

And it works the other way, too.  
 A lack of faith can prevent what God desires to do in our lives.

Jesus is speaking in his hometown of Nazareth.  
 At first, people are impressed with him.

But then they begin to say,  
 So, who is this guy?  
 He's the carpenter's son, right?  
 He's Mary's kid.  
 He's not all that special.  
 And the Bible says they took offense at him.

Here's the result.

**Matthew 13.58:** And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Did God love the people of Nazareth  
 less than he loved other people?  
 Did Jesus have less power there  
 than in other places?

No.  
 What was the difference then?  
 Why were few miracles done in Nazareth?  
 It was their lack of faith.

Do you want to see God at work in your life?  
 Do you want him to heal you change you, transform you?  
 Then you need faith.

Faith opens us up to the power and the blessing of God.  
 Lack of faith prevents us from experiencing all God wants to do in our lives.

Pauls sums it up well in

**Romans 1.17:** For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a  
 righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The  
 righteous will live by faith.”

From first to last, the righteousness that is ours through Christ  
 and the righteous life we are called to live for him –  
 it's by faith.

Faith is how we receive salvation.  
Faith empowers us to live the Christian life.  
Faith makes room for God to do his work in our lives.

So, always have faith.  
It's a rule for living the Christian life.

### **What is Faith?**

If faith is so important,  
we should make certain we know just what faith is.

Faith is more than intellectually believing  
that something is true.  
It's more than a feeling that something is real.  
Faith is a willingness to trust what I believe.  
It's being willing to act on what I say I believe.

I believe a stock is going up 50% in the next week.  
But I don't believe it enough to invest my money in that stock.  
I have a belief,  
but I don't have faith.

A woman believes her husband is being true to his marriage vows.  
But she gets an app so she can track where he drives every day.  
She has a belief about her husband,  
but she doesn't have faith in her husband.

You believe a bridge should be capable of bearing your weight.  
But you refuse to cross over it.  
You have a belief,  
but you don't have faith.

If you have faith in something,  
you trust it;  
you trust it enough to act on it.

People say,  
 “Sure, I believe in God.”  
 Great.  
 But that’s not the same as having faith in God.

**James 2.19:** You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.

James makes it perfectly clear in this passage.  
 You can believe in God without having faith in God.

Demons believe in God.  
 They know he exists.  
 In fact, they fear him.

But they do not change how they live.  
 And that’s what faith is –  
 it’s trusting what you believe enough  
 to commit yourself to what you believe  
 and to change your life accordingly.

So,

## **Who or What are We To Put Our Faith in?**

### **1. We are to Put Faith in God**

I know that’s obvious.  
 But I’m setting the table for next week’s lecture on  
 when we should not have faith.

What does it mean that we put our faith in God,  
 It means we trust in the character of God.  
 We trust that he is who he is revealed to be in Scripture  
 and that he will act accordingly.

God is: loving, holy, wise, omniscient and omnipotent.



That's his nature,  
that's his character.  
And when we say we have faith in him,  
it means we believe that  
God know us,  
he loves us,  
he knows what's best for us,  
he's working on our behalf,  
and we will live as if that is true,  
no matter what our circumstances or our emotions tell us.

Here's reality.  
There will be many, many times in our lives  
when it will feel as if  
God does not care about us  
and that he's not working for our good.

I remember praying with an elderly man many years ago  
who was suffering with cancer.  
He had lost his wife  
and he felt alone and he was hurting.

I asked him if he knew that God loved him.  
And I'll never forget his answer.  
He said: I don't think God even knows my name anymore.

That's where the prophet Habakkuk was.  
The people of Israel were suffering.  
Evil men were prospering  
and doing harm to the innocent.  
And Habakkuk wanted God to act  
and to bring about justice.  
But God was silent,  
and it made no sense.

Like a prosecuting attorney Habakkuk lays out his case,  
basically telling God that he's not doing his job.

**Habakkuk 1.2-3:**

How long, O LORD, must I call for help?

But you do not listen!

“Violence is everywhere!” I cry,

but you do not come to save.

Must I forever see these evil deeds?

Why must I watch all this misery?

Wherever I look,

I see destruction and violence.

When he has finished charging God with dereliction of duty,  
the prophet concludes:

**Habakkuk 2.1:** I will climb up to my watchtower  
and stand at my guard post.

There I will wait to see what the LORD says  
and how he will answer my complaint.

We have terrible things happen in our lives  
or in the lives of those we love.

And our pain and our confusion put pressure on us to conclude  
that God is failing at his job,  
that he doesn't love us  
or he isn't powerful,  
or maybe he has forgotten our name.

Our emotions tell us that God has abandoned us.

Look, this is where people live.

This is where at some point you will live.

And you may live there a long time.

What's critical is that you hold onto your faith that

God is good,

God is wise,

God loves you, and

see it or not,

God is working on your behalf.

At the heart of the Christian faith is the crucifixion  
of our Lord Jesus.

2000 years later we call that day Good Friday,  
but that's not what those who loved him thought.

His mother was there,  
along with some of the 12, and  
some of his other followers.

And what they saw was  
the best man they had ever known nailed to a cross.  
A beautiful life that had done nothing but love and heal and give grace;  
a man who had told them about a God they could trust and call Father –  
they saw him after he had been spat upon, beaten and given 39 lashes.  
And then they watched as he was stripped and crucified.

Where is God?  
Wouldn't that be the question they were asking?  
Why doesn't God do something?  
Doesn't he care?

How long, O LORD, must I call for help?  
But you do not listen!  
"Violence is everywhere!" I cry,  
but you do not come to save.  
Why must I watch all this misery?

That's what Habakkuk prayed.  
That's what they must have felt.

God, where are you?

Today we know where God was.  
He was there – on the cross.

Why doesn't he do something?  
Today we know he was doing something –  
something that none of them could have imagined;  
and even today, we can hardly comprehend.

Why?

Because he loves us.

Because he is good and wants the best for us.

Because he is wise beyond our understanding

and knows how to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

Because he can be always trusted

even when our emotions and our circumstances

tell us that he has failed us,

Jesus tried to prepare his disciples for the cross.

In the upper room at the Last Supper,

he told them that he would be betrayed and put to death.

And he gives them these words

**John 14.1:** Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

Believe in God.

No matter what happens.

Trust God,

always trust God.

Put your faith in him.

He will be faithful.

This quote is often attributed to C.H. Spurgeon,

though it's unclear who actually said it.

“God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. When we cannot trace His hand, we can always trust His heart.”

Let life take your health.

Let life take your finances.

Let life take your hopes and your dreams.

Let life take your loved ones.

Let life take away your ability to make sense of things.

But never let it take away your faith

that God loves you and that God is working for your good.

Peggy Kerr was a dear woman.  
A member of our church for many years.  
She had a servant's heart,  
    the spirit of encouragement, and  
    a love for learning.  
People loved her and sought her out  
    for wisdom and counsel.

Peggy was diagnosed with ALS.  
It's hard to imagine a more overwhelming diagnosis.  
It would be so easy to become angry and bitter.  
And to ask God, "Why me?  
    Why this?  
    Where are you?  
    Don't you care?"

But Peggy never asked those questions.  
Her faith never wavered.  
Her life continued to witness to the goodness of God.

The last time I saw her she was in a hospital bed,  
    nearing the end of her life.  
She was unable to speak or to swallow.  
Every few seconds someone would have to suction  
    the saliva from her mouth because she felt like she was choking.

Her husband Harold was right by her side.  
I cannot tell you how difficult it was to see her like that.  
I cannot imagine what it was like for them.

Do you know what Scripture passage she asked that I read at her funeral?

Remember Habakkuk?  
God, where are you?  
I'm going to wait for an answer.

God responds to Habakkuk  
 and tells the prophet that he will act.  
 He says to Habakkuk,  
 if it seems slow in coming,  
 wait patiently,  
 for a better day,  
 a day of righteousness and justice is coming.

And he gives Habakkuk, this word,

**Habakkuk 2.4:** The righteous shall live by faith.

At the end of the book,  
 nothing has changed,  
 not really.  
 Things are still bad for Habakkuk  
 and for his people.

But Habakkuk has changed  
 and he makes one of the greatest statements of faith  
 recorded in the Bible.

Now, the reason I'm telling you this,  
 is not just to let you know what happened to Habakkuk,  
 but also so you'll appreciate it when I tell you  
 this is the passage that Peggy Kerr  
 chose to be her final witness to the world  
 when she was dying of ALS.

**Habakkuk 3.17-18:** Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on  
 the vines; though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food; though  
 there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in  
 the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

When nothing is right.  
 When nothing makes sense.  
 When I'm diagnosed with ALS.  
 When I can't move a single muscle.  
 When I have lost control of my body and my life –

still, I will trust him.  
 I will put my faith in him  
 and rejoice in him.

Because even if I cannot trust his hand,  
 I can always trust his heart.

I know life is unfair and hard.  
 I know you often don't receive the appreciation you deserve.  
 It's understandable if you get down  
 and feel sorry for yourself from time to time.

But don't ever let it take from you the faith  
 that God is with you,  
 that he loves you, and  
 he is working for your good.

## **2. We are to Put Faith in Jesus**

Describing what it means to put faith in God  
 and what it means to put faith in Jesus –  
 these are huge topics.  
 And I can't do them justice this morning –  
 or probably in a hundred mornings.

Let's look at a verse you are familiar with.

**John 3.16:** For God so loved that world that he gave his only-begotten Son that  
 whosoever believes in him (the word for believe here in the Greek actually  
 means to put faith in, to trust in) should not perish but have eternal life.

Two points that are critically important here.

Putting Faith in Jesus means

### **A. We have faith that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God.**

You may remember that I have told you that  
the Greek word for only-begotten Son is monogenas.

It comes from two Greek words –  
monos – meaning one or the same  
and  
genas – the word from which we get our English words “genes” or  
“genetics.”

So, when we put faith in Jesus,  
it means we believe that he is divine –  
he posses the same nature as the Father.  
We are God’s creatures  
and can be adopted into his family as sons.

But Jesus is utterly unique.  
From eternity he has been God,  
sharing the same divine nature as the Father.

That means that I trust what Jesus teaches.  
He knows what pleases God and  
what doesn’t.

It means that Jesus is not just  
one of many good teachers or  
one of many good social reformers or  
one of many helpful religious guides.

It means as Peter said,  
You alone have the words of life.

And where the words and the teachings of Jesus differ  
from any other person  
no matter how admired or how intelligent,  
about who God is or how to live,  
I will trust in Jesus.



Practically this means,

I can say I believe in the teachings of Jesus and  
I can intellectually agree that self-denial, humility generosity, and putting  
other people first is the way we experience the abundance of life.

But if I don't live that way –

if I'm all about myself,  
if I live clutching onto all I have  
and refuse to share my time and my resources,  
then I don't have true faith in Christ and his teachings.

Of course, we're all a work in progress,

still struggling to overcome our selfishness and our pride,  
hoping and working to become more like Jesus.

I'm not trying to make you feel guilty for still having a long way to go –

I do, too –

I'm just trying to make it as clear as possible

that if we have true faith in Jesus  
we will be making progress in living the life he calls us to live.

2 – putting faith in Jesus means

**B. We have faith that the death of Jesus saves us from our sins  
and makes us right with God.**

It means that we believe and that we trust that Jesus is our Savior,  
and the Savior of all who put their faith in him.

If I say I have put faith in Jesus as my Savior,

it means I trust his death for my salvation,  
not my good works.

It means I trust that his death is sufficient

to atone for my sins and save my soul.

When I stand before God and

he asks why I should be allowed to spend eternity with him,

I'm not going to say,

“Because I lived a good life.”

Or “because Jesus died for me – and I lived a good life.”

I'm going to say –

“There is no reason you should allow this sinner to enjoy your presence  
 for a single second much less eternity except for this:  
 Jesus Christ shed his blood for my sins  
 and he died for my salvation.  
 And if that's not enough,  
 if that's not the right answer,  
 I am in deep trouble  
 because that's what I'm trusting;  
 that's the only thing I'm trusting.”

But it also means this.  
 If you have true faith,  
 if you have given us the illusion that you can make yourself right with  
 God  
 by doing enough good deeds or by reforming your life or by going to  
 church and making yourself a better man –  
 if you have genuinely trusted in Christ as your Savior,  
 you can trust that you are forgiven  
 and you can have faith that when you leave this world,  
 God will embrace you and welcome you into his kingdom.

Finally,  
**We are to Put Faith in the Promises of God.**

As Joshua came to the end of his life,  
 he spoke to the leaders of Israel.  
 Joshua had seen a lot.

He had suffered as a young man  
 when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt,  
 feeling hopeless and forgotten.

He had witnessed the mighty, gracious hand of God  
 miraculously freeing the Israelites from bondage.

He was with Moses,  
 wandering in the wilderness for forty years,  
 and he had seen God lead them  
 with a pillar of cloud by day and with fire by night.

He had watched God go before the Israelites into the Promised Land,  
 fight their battles,  
 defeat their enemies and  
 give them a home.

These are some of the words that he leaves his people with.

**Joshua 23.14:** Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

When we face difficult times,  
 we turn to something.  
 We look for something to trust in  
 and to stand on.

Some of us turn to our circumstances;  
 when they're good, we're good.  
 When they're not, we're not.

Some of us look to our finances.  
 As long as they're strong,  
 we're confident and  
 we feel like we can handle whatever the world throws at us.

Some of us trust our wisdom and our intellect.  
 Some of us turn to our resourcefulness.  
 Others of us go up and down with our emotions.  
 Others of us look to other people.

Whatever we trust in,  
 one day we will find it insufficient.  
 When your wife is diagnosed with cancer,  
 when your child is addicted to drugs,  
 when a friend betrays you,  
 when your heart is broken,

you are going to find that you need a strength that is greater than  
what you possess or  
this world can provide.

And you will need to trust in the promises of God.

“I will never leave you or forsake you.  
I know the plans I have for you,  
plans for good and not for evil.  
You can do all things through Christ,  
There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.  
Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden  
and I will give you rest.  
I will direct your ways.”

When life is hard,  
when you are uncertain what to do,  
when you are overwhelmed  
and your resources are inadequate,  
you will need a strength that is not your own.

And that strength comes not from having all the right answers,  
but from having faith in the promises of God  
that are greater than your problems.

**Matthew 7.24-25:** So then, anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys  
them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain poured down,  
the rivers flooded over, and the wind blew hard against that house. But it did  
not fall, because it was built on rock.

Trust in the words of Jesus,  
what he has taught and what he has promised –  
trust in them enough to build your life upon them  
and when the storms come you will find strength  
and you will not fall.

So, faith is incredibly important.

Faith in God,

faith in Jesus,

faith in his promises –

faith allows us to experience salvation, live a Christian life  
and receive what God wants to do in our lives.

**Pursuit of Happiness**