TILTE: Genuine faith

TEXT: Heb. 11:6; Ephe. 2:8; Heb. 11:1; Gal. 3:6-9;

Heb. 11:8-12; Gen. 12:1 & 22:1-2; Heb. 11:17-19 & 12:1-3; Phil. 3:20

INTRODUCTION: A man by the name of Frank A. Clark once said:

“Faith on a full stomach may be simply contentment--but if you have it when you're hungry, it's genuine.”

This morning I want to talk about faith.

Why is genuine faith important? What is true faith? How do we attain it? How will it be manifest in our lives?

First, why is faith important?

**Hebr 11:6 (NIV) And 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.**

Faith is important because without it we will never be able to please God!

**Ephe 2:8 (NIV) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--**

**9 not by works, so that no one can boast.**

**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith!**

Our very salvation, being saved from our sin, saved from sins final consequence, an eternity of separation from God in hell, is a gift of Gods grace, but it only becomes a reality in our life as we exercise our faith in God to save us!

**For it is by (Gods) grace we have been saved, through (our) faith!**

But even our faith is a gift from God!

So, if it is our desire to please God, our desire to be saved from the just penalty for our sin and experience the salvation of God we must do so through faith!

So what is true faith?

Hebr 11:1 (NIV) Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

As a Christian, what is it that we hope for that we cannot see?

Has anyone here this morning ever seen Heaven? Has anyone here literally seen Jesus? Has anyone here literally seen the book of life in which the names of all those who are saved are written?

Even though you haven’t literally seen heaven or literally seen Jesus or the Book of life in which your name is written, do you believe that they exist?

If you believe that these things exist, that, in itself doesn’t mean that you have a genuine faith!

But do you believe, know, beyond a shadow of a doubt in your mind, that they exist? If you do, then you have a genuine faith!

Because genuine faith, true faith is: being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

True faith is being **sure** of what we hope for!

**5287 hupostasis {hoop-os'-tas-is}**

**2) that which has foundation.**

**2a) that which has actual existence**

**2a1) a substance, being real**

**2c) the steadfastness of mind, firmness, courage, resolution, confidence, firm trust, assurance**

Genuine faith is being sure of what we hope for!

That what we hope for has substance! It has foundation! We have confidence in it, stand firm in it, we are assured of it!

And genuine faith is also being **certain** of what we do not see!

**1650 elegchos {el'-eng-khos}**

**1) a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested**

**2) conviction**

It is being fully convinced that those things that we hope for that we cannot see or experience with our senses exist!

We cannot see, taste, touch, hear or smell these things that we hope for! We cannot see, taste, touch, hear or smell Gods Kingdom, heaven, our resurrected body, our being saved from hell, yet when we are fully convinced that these things are a reality anyway, that is genuine faith! When we come to the place of being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see!

So how to we attain this kind of faith? A faith that is sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see?

The best example of Scripture is probably found in the life of Abraham, one who Scripture refers to as the father of our faith….

**Gala 3:6 (NIV) Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."**

**7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.**

**8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."**

**9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.**

**Abraham believed God, and it** (his belief) **was credited to him as righteousness."**

We get a Hebrews 11 faith, a faith that is sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see by simply believing God!

Abraham believed God.

**4100 pisteuo {pist-yoo'-o}**

**1) to think to be true, to be persuaded of, place**

**confidence in**

**1b1) used in the NT of the conviction and trust to which a man**

**is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and**

**law of soul to trust in Jesus or God as able to aid either in**

**obtaining or in doing something: saving faith**

**2) to entrust a thing to one, i.e. his fidelity**

To believe is to know something to be true, be persuaded of it, have confidence in it.

**Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."**

Let’s see what Abraham’s belief accomplished? How was his faith manifest? What manifestation did Abraham’s faith take?

**Hebr 11:8 (NIV) 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.**

9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

**10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**

Gene 12:1 (NIV) The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

God told Abraham to go and Abraham went!

Well, what is the big deal?

God told Abraham to: **Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.**

God didn’t tell Abraham where he was going ahead of time! God asked Abraham to make a lot of sacrifices without giving him a detailed map of what was ahead of him!

God told Abraham to leave his country, leave his homeland!

Leave his people, his nation!

Leave his family and friends!

To leave all that he loved and was familiar with and go to a land that God would show him when he got there!

Maybe it would be a land that wasn’t as good as the land he was leaving! Maybe there would be hardship along the way! Maybe he would miss his family and friends! Maybe he would never see his mom and dad again!

How could Abraham make such an important decision on just Gods command to go?

Because Abraham had a genuine faith! Abraham believed God! Abraham was sure of what he hoped for and confidant of what he could not see!

So Abraham packed up his bags and started walking!

Abraham lived a life of true faith!

**11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.**

12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Abraham’s wife, Sarah, was barren, she couldn’t have children. God promised Abraham that his wife Sarah would conceive and have his child. The thing was Abraham was getting old! He was about 100 and Sarah was 90! Both of them well past the age of childbearing!11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

God had made the promise but that promise was brought to realization through Abraham’s faith! Because Abraham believed God! Because Abraham was sure of what he hoped for and confidant of what he could not see!

Later Abraham faced the ultimate test of his faith!

**Gene 22:1 (NIV) Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"**

**"Here I am," he replied.**

**2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."**

Paul talks about this ultimate test of Abraham’s faith in Hebrews 11.

**Hebr 11:17 (NIV) By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,**

**18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."**

**19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.**

What we need to understand here is that Abraham did offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God!

The decision to obey God and offer up Isaac had already been made in Abraham’s heart! It was an accomplished act! Had the Lord not spoken and stopped him he would have done it!

Abraham had already made the decision in his heart..

In that sense the deed had already been done!

How could Abraham even consider killing his son whom he loved more then life itself? The son whom he had waited all his life to receive?

Abraham believed God!

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand on the seashore and that those descendants would come through his son Isaac!

Abraham believed God! Abraham knew that God had to be true to His promises! Abraham knew that in order for this promise to be realized then Isaac would have to live and have children himself!

If he obeyed God and offered Isaac up as a sacrifice to God Abraham knew that God would have to still be true to His word even if that meant His raising Isaac from the dead!

How could Abraham make that gamble? How could he do it? Because for Abraham it was no gamble!

Abraham was sure of what he hoped for and certain of what he could not see!

Abraham believed God and his belief was credited to him as righteousness!

So, do we manifest this kind of faith in our life today?

This kind of faith is manifest in our life today the same way that it was in the day of Abraham!

This kind of faith is manifest in our life today as we simply believe God. Believe God to the degree that we too can be blindly obedient to Him because we know that the one who made the promise is faithful.

What enables us to have this kind of faith and belief in God is, I believe, keeping our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus.

On day six of the ill-fated mission of Apollo 13, the astronauts needed to make a critical course correction. If they failed, they might never return to Earth.

They needed to conserve power so they shut down the onboard computer that steered the craft. To right the craft the astronauts needed to conduct a thirty-nine-second burn of the main engines. How would they be able to steer without the computer?

Astronaut Jim Lovell determined that if they could keep a fixed point in space in view through their tiny window, they could steer the craft manually.

That focal point turned out to be their destination—Planet Earth.

As shown in 1995's hit movie, Apollo 13, for thirty-nine agonizing seconds, Lovell focused on keeping the earth in view. By not losing sight of that reference point, the three astronauts avoided disaster and returned home safely.

The same is true with us as Christians if we are to live the life of genuine faith that God has called us to live!

We need to keep our eyes fixed on our focal point if we are to have any hope of reaching our destination safely!

Ifour destination is Heaven, spending an eternity with God, then our focal point needs to be Jesus!

After speaking about this great cloud of witnesses that has gone on before us and victoriously lived a life of faith, Paul goes on to say….

**Hebr 12:1 (NIV) Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.**

**2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

**3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

Because of this great cloud of witnesses, all the men and women of the faith that have gone on before us and have now claimed the prize of their faith and who are now experiencing the realization of their faith! Because of their life’s witness to us, because of their example of how to live a life that is faithful to God, let us also throw off everything thing that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us!

And then we are told how we can do just that.

How we can throw off everything that hinders us from living a life of genuine faith and the sin that so easily entangles us and keeps us from living the lives God wants us to live!

**2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith!**

For the astronauts of Apollo 13 their focal point, the place that they needed to keep their eyes fixed upon to make sure that they would arrive home safely was their ultimate destination, planet earth…

For us, our focal point, the place that we need to keep our eyes firmly fixed upon to make sure that we reach our ultimate destination safely, the destination of Heaven, is Jesus!

**2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith!**

Let us Fix our eyes upon Him!

**872 aphorao {af-or-ah'-o}**

**1) to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on something.**

Before we will ever be able to fix our eyes upon Jesus it will require that we turn them away from other things!

The Apollo Astronauts needed to fix their eyes upon their home of earth to reach home safely….

We need to keep our eyes firmly fixed upon our eternal home if we are to get there safely!

And if we are a Christian, our eternal home isn’t planet earth!

Earth is a place that we are but just passing through—as a Christian our true citizenship isHeaven!

Phil 3:20 (NIV) But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Our citizenship is in heaven!

**4175 politeuma {pol-it'-yoo-mah}**

**2) the constitution of a commonwealth, form of government**

**3a) the commonwealth of citizens**

It speaks of a place of national alliance, a commonwealth!

A place that a people have and share in common, where their home is, where their allegiance and loyalties lie!

As Christians our true citizenry is not in this world in which we now reside but we are citizens of the Kingdom of God! Our real home, the place that our allegiance and loyalties lay first is to be the Kingdom of God and our ultimate destination as a Christian, Heaven!

It is a place that we will arrive at only one way and that is by faith! As we keep our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus who is said to be the author and perfecter of our faith!

This morning, do you consider yourself a citizen of the Kingdom of God, a citizen of Heaven?

If so, is that where your allegiance and loyalties firstmost lie today?

Is it your hearts desire to one day go home and take up permanent residence there when your pilgrimage of this life is over?

Do you have genuine faith? A faith that is sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see?

Do you have your eyes fixed firmly upon Jesus who is both the author, (the originator), and the perfecter (the one who brings to completion) our faith?

Are you living your life firmly focused, firmly fixed upon Christ?

It is only when we do that our faith will be a genuine saving faith, the kind of faith that Jesus said would be able to move mountains…

Maybe you have mountains, mountains of obstacle, mountains of trial or tribulation in your life this morning that need to be moved…..

Well, take heart! There is good news!

God has given us the means to move them!

Put your faith in God into action by firmly fixing your eyes upon Jesus and living your life wholly for Him and you will see those mountains literally fall before you!

(prayer –forgive us for our lack of faith, questioning our own salvation, questioning your goodness, our worth to you, the power of your Holt Spirit, the ability you have given us to go and sin no more…the ability to become like you.

**Illustration: Memory**

Two middle-aged couples were enjoying friendly conversation when one of the men asked the other, "Fred, how was the memory clinic you went to last month?"

"Outstanding," Fred replied. "They taught us all the latest psychological techniques, such as visualization, association and so on. It was great. I haven't had a problem since.""Sounds like something I could use. What was the name of the clinic?"Fred went blank. He thought and thought, but couldn't remember.Then a smile broke across his face and he asked, "What do you call that flower with the long stem and thorns?""You mean a rose?""Yes, that's it!"He turned to his wife, "Hey Rose, what was the name of that memory clinic?"