

"Faith" Hebrews 11:1-16 / Luke 12:32-40 (08/10/25)

The Word "Faith" is something we Christians hear and use very often. Ever since I started attending church, I have heard many messages about faith. "If you believe in Jesus, you will be saved." "Believe, and it will be given to you." "Believe in what God will do." "We are saved by faith." The topic of faith is used a lot in church.

When I first learned about faith, I thought faith was like a kind of master key that could solve everything. I learned that if I asked God with faith, I could receive what I wanted. I also learned that there was nothing impossible within faith. If we had faith as small as a mustard seed, we could move mountains.

So I tried many times to receive something by faith. I had heard many testimonies where people prayed in faith and received what they had asked for. I prayed like that, too. In New Zealand, I once looked at a hill to test whether it would move. In South Korea, during a financially difficult time, I bought a lottery ticket "by faith." Whenever I wanted or needed something, I prayed for it in faith. But honestly, I never experienced anything dramatic like in those testimonies.

Instead, there were small moments when I did not pray seriously but just wished for something quietly, and God answered. I still remember this: after returning from New Zealand to Korea, I was studying for a university admission exam to apply to the seminary. While studying, I thought, "Ah, I want curry," and that day I had curry for lunch. Or when I was tired from studying and thought, "Ah, I want to go to the sauna," my father suddenly came and took me there. I do not remember many times when God answered my requests with strong faith, but I do remember experiencing a God who listened even to my little desires.

Of course, if we have faith, there is nothing impossible in life, not because faith itself has power, but because, as the Gospels show, Jesus performed many signs when He saw people's faith. But if we use faith as a tool to get what we want, then our faith becomes nothing more than a charm or a totem. Many Christians today misunderstand faith as simply a means to achieve personal desires, especially when linking faith with the miracles of Jesus.

So, what does faith really mean? What should we believe, and how should we live by faith?

Hebrews 11 describes faith very well: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

Faith means having confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. The Greek word for faith here is πίστις (pistis), which means "reliance upon Christ for salvation." So, we can say that faith is to rely entirely on Christ for our salvation.

The author of Hebrews is unknown, but from the title and content, we can see it was written to Jewish Christians who had decided to believe in Jesus. Many scholars believe it was written during a time when Christians were suffering from persecution by Rome.

For the Jewish people, the Messiah (Christos) was their greatest hope, something their ancestors had been waiting for. Hebrews explains to them that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. In chapter 11, this "hope" can be understood in two ways: first, having confidence in Jesus Christ as our hope; and second, hoping for His return to end their suffering.

At the time, one major conflict in the church was that some converts from

Judaism still believed that salvation comes by work. At that time, Christian doctrine was not yet well-developed, so many theological arguments arose in the church. Hebrews reminded these struggling Christians that our salvation comes not by our works but by our faith, by our complete reliance on the Messiah, Christ.

In church, we use the word “faith” often, but what exactly should we believe? We can believe that God will do good things for us, or that He will solve our life problems. But these are only side branches.

First, we must believe in God, in God’s faithfulness. God is the one who gives us God’s covenant and always fulfills it.

When I was in seminary in Korea, there was a church history professor I respected. He had an interesting personal rule. He never chose living people as his mentors or role models. Studying history, he preferred to learn from the faith of those who had already passed away, because they would never change. When he was young, he had admired great pastors and Christians, but later, when they changed, he was deeply disappointed. So, he decided only to look up to those who were already with the Lord.

In this world, there is nothing we can fully trust. Our family, friends, and neighbors are not the people to believe in, but to love. Only God is perfect. If we place our faith in imperfect beings, we will be disappointed. But God, being perfect, can be trusted completely. God will always keep God’s promises made to us.

This perfect and almighty God kept God’s promise to send the Messiah to save us. So, Second, we must believe that Jesus is the Christ. Faith is to rely on Christ for salvation, and we believe that this Christ is Jesus. His saving work is

not something we can physically see, but by faith, we are sure that He has saved us. Jesus is the proof of God's covenant—the fulfillment of God's promise to save us. By becoming the sacrificial Lamb, Jesus fulfilled that promise. Jesus brought the reconciliation between God and humans by solving the problem of sin through His death and gave us new life through His resurrection. We must believe that this Christ is Jesus.

When Jesus, who is Christ, ascended to the right hand of the Father, He promised to send the Holy Spirit, our Advocate. So, thirdly, we must believe that the Holy Spirit is always with us. Though we cannot see the Holy Spirit, we can be assured of the presence of the Holy Spirit through faith. This is not blind faith that ignores reality. The Holy Spirit helps us to experience God in our hearts truly.

Before I experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit, my sister often told me I was an emotionally dry person. I struggled to sympathize with people's difficulties or pain. But after experiencing the Holy Spirit's presence, I suddenly felt a deep, tearing sorrow for people who died without knowing Jesus. At first, I could not control this feeling well, so I even cried out loud while walking down the street. This compassion was clearly from the Holy Spirit.

If you have a desire to know God more, to read the Bible, to worship, or to help those in need, that is evidence that the Holy Spirit is in you. Our faith is not blind; it is relational, rooted in the Holy Spirit who dwells with us.

How then should we live by faith? We should live believing that Jesus will come again. There is still one promise in Scripture yet to be fulfilled: the return of Christ. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all faithful to their covenants, so we can be sure this promise of the second coming of Jesus will be fulfilled. Knowing

Jesus will return, we live not with hope in this world but with hope in the Kingdom of God, where Jesus will reign.

Living by faith means walking with the Holy Spirit, holding onto the hope of God's Kingdom.

Faith is to fully rely on Christ in the matter of our salvation. We believe in the perfect and faithful God, and we confess that Jesus is the Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit is with us, and by God's hope, we believe that Jesus will return.

We are saved by faith and sanctified by faith. My hope for this week is that the Holy Spirit will give us strong assurance and that our faith in God will be strengthened through this week, with the presence of God in our lives. Amen.