



Hebrews 11:1-3 & 11:39-12:2

TITLE

At the beginning of the year I started with a series called The Hope of Glory. In it we started to explore the theme of the glory of God. Why? Because when we understand just what God is like, it changes us. It changes our outlook on life, it changes our relationships. When we perceive God's glory, our universe gets bigger, our understanding of God gets bigger, and we get smaller, as do all our problems and pressures of life.

We looked at how we perceive God's glory in several ways – creation, the moral glory of God and the grace of God.

Now we are going to look at glory in quite a different way. It's best summed up in a verse that we shall be looking at this evening as part of our Colossians series.

VERSE

Colossians 1:27 God's plan is to make known his secret to his people, this rich and glorious secret which he has for all peoples. And the secret is that Christ is in you, which means that you will share in the glory of God.

Are you a Christian this morning? Have you trusted Jesus as your own personal Saviour and Lord? Then by His Spirit, He is in you this morning. As a result He is the hope of glory – we shall share in the glory of God. What is His will be ours!

Glory is not something that we experience as onlookers, but something that in Christ is our hope – that which we are becoming part of. As many of you will know, I have always encouraged each of us to understand and claim the promises God makes to His people – we need to appropriate all the blessings God freely gives to His people in Christ.

I find the problem often is with sermons that people say “fine, I believe in what God has done for me in Christ and I know what has been said about the glory of God – but life-changing? No, not at the moment. I'd like my Christian life to be amazing, joyful, glorious, miraculous – but that isn't how it is. How can I experience all this?”

And the answer – through faith! You can see faith as a “connector” which secures all the blessings that come through the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary into the realm of our lives. Actually, faith is the foundation of all spiritual experience.

VERSE

Rom 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

WHAT IS FAITH? Actually the word we translate is the Greek word *pistis* which means conviction of the truth of anything, belief. It's not a wishy washy idea that I kinda believe something. Its root is the Greek word to persuade. Faith in something is a conviction

that causes me to act in a particular way.

VERSE

Actually the Bible defines it for us in *Hebrews 11: 1 To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.*

Faith isn't an abstract idea. It's something we are sure that determines our actions. Here is a chair. Chairs have been known to collapse under my weight. I am happy to sit on this. It is an act of faith that I choose to sit on it. But my faith comes from experience. I sit on it because I know these chairs are sturdy, relatively new and I can put some basic tests to it to confirm that. It doesn't require an engineers report to trust it will hold my weight.

It's the same with the Christian faith. If you know Jesus this morning then you have already taken a step of faith – perhaps many because what you believe moved you to action. I know for some of you the step was easy, for others it came after questioning and struggle. But you got there and you stepped out and trusted Jesus – and doubtless found Him to be everything He says He is.

VERSE

Eph 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast.

I've always found with God that everything becomes clear after the step of faith. We can think and try to get assurances all we like, but God always leaves us what I call a "faith margin" a position where we must step out trusting Him. Then we prove God for ourselves. It says this in *Hebrews 11:6 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.* And the reward is that we become even more sure of what we have believed in. Is that your experience? It certainly is mine.

So, Faith is based on experience. The Christian life is a faith life. We grow and flourish as God's people because we take step after step in faith, and in doing so we become stronger.

VERSE

Each believer already has a measure of faith which God has given us. This is how Paul put it to the Romans:.

Rom 12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

So as we experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, then we grow and are encouraged to take larger steps of faith. If for some reason we are discouraged in our faith, or distracted by other things in our lives, then somehow our faith starts to lack and we lose confidence in our walk and worship as Christians. It happens a lot and it happens to all of us.

ASK FOR FAITH TO BE RELEASED IN YOU

Jesus was once faced with a man who asked for his demon-possessed son to be delivered. The man said:

Mark 9:22 Have pity on us and help us, if you possibly can!" 23 "Yes," said Jesus, "if you yourself can! Everything is possible for the person who has faith." 24 The father at once cried out, "I do have faith, but not enough. Help me have more!"

Feel you need a “faith-lift”? Ask the One who releases faith in us. Ask. Usually the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to what God is doing. But we have a responsibility too – to place ourselves in a position to see. In Felixstowe we have a number of events in a year to go to, for example, the Carnival. If you go to watch the procession, you'll find that the only way to get the most out of it is to put yourself in a position where you are most likely to see everything, not the back of someone's head or way of in the distance.

It's the same with faith-building things. Place yourself in the position where the Holy Spirit can work in you. Practical things. Pray. Read God's word regularly. Look for what God is doing in your life and in the church. That's why I am encouraging you to share your testimonies. Not just what God did for you in the past, but what He's doing now! Share in your small groups, share here on a morning service, write something to put online, get videoed so it goes on the website. Be encouraged by what God is doing in your life and in the lives of others!

Testimony about the Church finance.

There's also something else to build your faith that you need to do – get rid of things in your life that stop you growing: Heb 12:2 *As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us.*

If you have sin in your life you will have a faith and growth problem. Today we have the encouragement of the Holy Spirit to deal with it.

As our faith builds we see the benefits in our lives. We grow and mature as Christians. Why? Here are four things I suggest that help us and I'm going to lead us in prayer about in a few moments time.

Faith gives us certainty about things not seen.

1 To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see. 2 It was by their faith that people of ancient times won God's approval. 3 It is by faith that we understand that the universe was created by God's word, so that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen.

Not sure about your faith, or things about the Christian faith? Then ask the Holy Spirit to make you certain of things you can't see and things you can't understand.

Faith helps us to rest in Jesus and receive from Him

2 Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right side of God's throne.

Feel like giving up sometimes as a Christian. Feel that your faith is weak and you're struggling. We've just come through Easter and we recall the struggle Jesus had in Gethsemane but to give a slightly better translation than we had in our reading: *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.* This morning let's ask Jesus to find the same confidence in Him that He had for us and find all the blessings that come through doing that.

Faith enables us to speak and move in God's power

2 Cor 4:13 13 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

1 Tim 1:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

One consequence of faith is that we see God moving and we can speak it out and share it with others. There's nothing more exciting than seeing God work in power in our lives. And we know as we go through all the struggles of life, we can trust Jesus to take us through

1 John 5:3-5 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God

Let's pray this morning that our faith may be such that we know we are overcomers and that we see the presence and power of God in our lives and the lives of others and that it will strengthen us.

Faith enables us to persist and endure.

39 What a record all of these have won by their faith! Yet they did not receive what God had promised, 40 because God had decided on an even better plan for us. His purpose was that only in company with us would they be made perfect. 12:1 As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us.

We've already had this hinted at a few times. Life is all about endurance, persistence, never giving up. It applies to all parts of life. We live in a society that wants instant success, but actually what works best is something that's been clung on to, built up, persevered with. Our faith is no different. God gives us strength to continue to see through all our problems and struggles so we can run the race because his prize is already waiting for us. Find faith and find the power to run that race this morning!

Prayer based on points above.

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