

STEADFAST CONFIDENCE Sunday School- September 9, 2012

Unifying Topic: FAITH IS ASSURANCE

Lesson Text

I. What Faith Is (Hebrews 11:1-3, 6)

II. God Is Our Refuge (Psalm 46:1-3)

III. Wars Will Cease And God Will Be Exalted (Psalm 46:8-11)

The Main Thought: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Because of all the conflicts in the world, people may lose hope for positive change. What prompts people to hope for positive change? By believing in God's strength, say the writers of Hebrews and the Psalms, we can be rescued and change can take place because God is with us; Jesus assures us that God will be with us if we trust as children do.

Lesson Aim: To show that God can be trusted even though the world may seem chaotic and frightening at times.

Life Aim: To teach Christians to place their trust and hopes in God alone and not in earthly securities or other people.

11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

11:2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

46:2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

46:3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

46:8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

46:9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

46:10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

46:11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

HISTORY:

In **Hebrews 10:32-34** the writer exhorts the Hebrews to remember their former days; the early days, when they had first come to Christ. They had to suffer a lot because they were Christians. In those days...

- they endured sufferings v.32.
- they were publicly exposed to reproach and affliction; made a spectacle of v33.
- they had compassion on those in prison v.34a.
- they were actually joyful when spoils of their possessions were taken v.34b.

All of this happened after they were "*illuminated*" (enlightened); shortly after they were saved. ¹But nobody could take away their inner joy. They had strong confidence as they suffered for and served Jesus Christ. They had done it before; they must do it now, knowing that they possessed something far greater than that which they had lost. They were strong in their faith and did not fail. This suffering was only going to be temporary.

10:35-39— The writer encourages the Hebrews to hang on to the boldness they have known. Don't cast or throw away their confidence because it has a great reward. If they would continue to endure they would receive the promise of God's reward. They would need patience. They would need to endure, persevere, and be steadfast in doing the will of God. The "*Will of God*" is the "*Word of God*" and being obedient to it. And afterward you will receive both a great recompense of reward (v.35) and the promise (v.36) because of their confidence and patience. Why? For Christ shall come soon. He will not tarry. All believers shall live by faith and faith alone.

- Commit your life and problems to God.
- Deny self (reject the feelings, emotions, and selfishness of the flesh).
- Act or behave in a way that you have made a commitment.
- Ask God for His grace and strength.

Faith preserves the soul but drawing back displeases God. Faith results in salvation but drawing or shrinking back unto "*perdition*" (punishment in hell) is not the believer's way. Living by feelings would be contrary to "*Will of God.*"

¹ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/hebrews-lbw.htm>

These are believers who have already suffered for Christ but they are to continue in what they possess.

LESSON:

Hebrews 11:1-3, 6 What Faith Is

11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. "Now", meaning at this present time and situation you're going through, faith "is" needed. **Now faith is**—It is in the present tense. The Hebrews were just told in (10:38): "*Now the just shall live by faith...*" They're not to draw back. And here in this verse, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for...*" Remember, Faith is in the present tense. It's not yesterday or tomorrow, it's "Now!"

Faith is described as "**substance**" (*Gr hypostasis*); the assurance, the confirmation, the title deed, the guarantee of things we hope for.

Faith is the "**evidence**" (*Gr elegchos*); conviction, proof of things not seen. Everyone has faith in something.

"Faith and hope go together; and the same things that are the object of our hope are the object of our faith. Faith is a firm persuasion and expectation that God will perform all that He has promised to us in Christ; and this persuasion is so strong that it gives the soul...possession...of those things. Christ dwells in the soul by faith; and the soul is filled with the fullness of God" (Matthew Henry).

There is your "**natural faith**" (*general*) and there is your "**spiritual faith**" (*God kind*). Natural faith comes so easily because we see the thing; we touch the thing in the physical. It's the bench or chair we take for granted to sit in, etc. It's the transportation we get in and drive to a destination or even getting paid at the end of two weeks for the work done at the beginning of the 1st week. But for spiritual faith, it has to grow; it's the thing we don't see; we don't touch; it's the thing that the Word of God touches in the Spirit. Because we don't see it yet, we give faith the substance when we use the Word of God. It is the evidence of His promises. The evidence is the truth of the Word of God because of His promises. It hadn't manifested in the natural because it's in the Spirit. The thing we hope for is in the Spirit and becomes a reality because we activated our faith. So with faith we can bring things from the spirit world to the natural world. Things we can't see— are real. When you change your expectancy, you can see the promise. Faith doesn't doubt but gives thanks to what you don't see. If you already hold the "**title deed**" because of the promises of God, then faith is possessing the substance of the promises of God and therefore the evidence is also there. Thank Him for it!

11:2 For by it the elders obtained a good report. "It" would be faith. The elders, the great men of God lived in the past, believed God and followed God. They turned away from the world, the possessions, pleasures, and followed God. Therefore, they staked their lives, all they were and had upon that hope. Now, that's faith! And their faith in God and His promises pleased God. He accepted their faith and honored them because of it by recording their faith in His Word, using their examples as a challenge to believers of every generation. They have obtained a good report.

11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. What does faith give us to understand concerning the worlds?

1. That these worlds were not already here nor did they produce themselves, but they were created and framed by God.
2. That the maker of the worlds is God. He is the maker of all things.
3. That He made the world with great exactness; it was a framed work, in everything duly adapted and disposed to answer its end.
4. That God made the world by His Word (Gen.1; Ps.33:6), that is, by His essential wisdom and eternal Son (Jh.1), and by His active will saying, Let it be done, and it was done (Ps.33: 9).
5. That the world was framed out of nothing, out of no pre-existent matter by God, who can call things that are not as if they were, and command them into being. These are the things we understand by faith.

The point is: the visible world that we see came from things that were not visible.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON Hebrews 11:4-5

11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. Abel tells us there is a way to be counted as righteous. How? By faith; by approaching and worshipping God exactly like He says to, that is, by the sacrifice of blood.

From the very first parents on earth (Adam and Eve), God laid it down, that the sin and guilt of man had to be borne by

ether man himself or by a substitute. Man had to die for his own sins or else a substitute had to be sacrificed for his sins. This is what God did for Adam and Eve. He provided clothing to cover their nakedness; coats or skins from animals; a symbol that sin had to be covered by the shedding of blood. This was a symbol that pointed to the blood of Jesus Christ, the blood of God's Son that had to be shed in order to cover the sins of men. Adam and Eve taught this to their children.

The difference between Abel and Cain was that Abel believed God Cain didn't. Cain made a material sacrifice (human works; fruits borne from the earth etc.) and offered it to God. Abel believed recognizing that he was sinful and imperfect and that he could never be acceptable to God who is perfect and holy, not until his sins and their guilt had been paid for and removed before he could ever be accepted by God. Therefore, he believed God would count him righteous if he let another bear his sins for him; all by faith. This was the more excellent sacrifice because God testified of the gift though dead yet it spoke. Abel and Enoch were both men of faith.

11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Enoch believed God; that if he walked and fellowshiped with God day by day, then God would look after and care for him. Therefore, Enoch walked with God and God looked after and cared for him. God even conquered death for Enoch. Enoch surrendered and lived a faithful life unto God. Faith took a hold on him. When it was time to go home with God, God transferred him right on into heaven, right into God's very own home, after which was not seen by anyone. He lived so close to God that he pleased God and this was his testimony in the midst of dying men.

BACK TO THE LESSON

11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. One can't please God without having faith. You can't even come to God if you don't believe that He is God. And you can't even be rewarded if you don't diligently seek Him. Faith is the first step! This is an active living faith that knows and follows God, communes and fellowships with Him. It doesn't matter what a person does in life, without exercising faith one cannot please God; it's impossible! A person that comes to God must believe two things:

1. He must believe in God—that God exists. The words "*must believe*" (*pisteusai dei*) mean necessary and essential, absolutely necessary and essential.
2. He must believe that God rewards those who diligently seek Him. The word "*diligently*" (*ekzetousin*) means to seek out God. God rewards those who diligently seek to know and follow Him.
 - a. By diligently seeking God, we "*hunger and thirst after righteousness.*"
 - b. By diligently seeking God, we "*ask, seek, and knock.*"
 - c. By diligently seeking God, we "*seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*"
 - d. By diligently seeking God, we "*pray and fast*", that is, to persevere in prayer.

The greater the need, the greater amount of time true faith spends speaking forth the need. The greater the need, the more diligent true faith seeks the answer to its need. What is the reward to those who diligently seek God? It's the same reward given to Abel and Enoch: righteousness and pleasing God.

Psalm 46:1-3 God Is Our Refuge

46:1a God—"God" or the Hebrew name "*Elohim*". First of all "*Elohim*" was used "*In the beginning God created.*" We are created for His will and He will take care of us. "*E'*" means "*mighty*" or "*strong*." The name of *Elohim* is your strong tower and unshakable refuge. The word for "*God*" in the singular sense is "*E'*" which is used most often in describing Gods characteristics or attributes.

46:1b "God is our refuge"...One translation of "*refuge*"—"*machaceh*"—A place you flee to for safety, like finding shelter from a rainstorm. Its meaning is from a verb to "*flee*" and then "*to flee to*" or "*to take shelter in*" - denotes a place to which one would flee in time of danger - "*as a lofty wall; a high tower; a fort; a fortress.*" While other nations boasted in their impregnable castles perched high on inaccessible cliffs secured with iron gates and protected by fierce warriors, Israel was in a safer position than them all.—God is for us as a place to which we may flee for safety; a source of strength to us in danger.

The first half of this verse is quite simple. God is our refuge, our shelter, the person to whom we flee. Changing the

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metaphor, God is like a mother bird protecting her young. Thus we find shelter beneath 'His' wings (Ruth 2:12). Using yet another image, when the heat of life becomes unbearable, we are invited to 'dwell in the secret place of the Most High', abiding 'under the shadow of the Almighty' (Ps. 91:1). We therefore may seek protection 'beneath' Him when trouble comes (Ps. 46:1).

1. REFUGE when running into the strong tower of the Name of the Lord to be safe – Pro.18:10
2. REFUGE when underneath His everlasting arms – Deut.33:27
3. REFUGE when in the day of my trouble – Ps.59:16
4. REFUGE when strong confidence shall have a place in Him – Prov.14:26
5. REFUGE from the storm – Is.25:4
6. REFUGE when He is a shelter and a strong tower from the enemy – Ps.61:3
7. REFUGE as He bare you on 'eagles wings', and bring you unto Himself – Exo.19:4

People constantly get confused when it comes to dependence upon God. This does not mean that we abandon all common sense. When we are on the roof of our home, and the water is rising, and we are praying for deliverance, and someone with a boat comes by and offers us a ride, we don't refuse and say, "I am waiting on God to deliver me." That boat is God providing you the deliverance. When there are tornados in your area or high force winds and devastating rain showers, and there is a recommended safe place in your house where you can go, then it is reasonable to go to that place. God is a refuge to run to.

"...and Strength" – "'oz" – means might, strength – This word is used in the sense of one person being able to prevail over another. God is our strength because He is able to prevail over our troubles. The word "strength" implies that God is the source of strength to those who are weak and defenseless; or that we may rely on His strength "as if" it were our own; or that we may feel as safe in His strength as though we had that strength ourselves. We may make it the basis of our confidence as really as though the strength resided in our own arm.

We can have fearless trust in Him no matter what upheavals are occurring in our lives or no matter what catastrophic events are happening all around us! ²Gaining the strength of God, however, is not an automatic occurrence. According to Scripture, we tap into God's strength by seeking Him (1 Chronicles 16:11), observing His commandments (Deuteronomy 11:8), loving Him (Psalm 18:1-2), and praising Him (Exodus 15:2). These are the secrets to gaining God's strength. But, if we are willing to do these things, we also gain strength in the following ways:

1. STRENGTH for all our days – Deut.33:25
2. STRENGTH for our heart – Ps.73:26
3. STRENGTH to overcome fear – Is.41:10
4. STRENGTH to overcome grief – Neh.8:10
5. STRENGTH for battle – Ps.18:29
6. STRENGTH to cross over and possess – Deut.11:8
7. STRENGTH to stay the course – Is.40:31
8. STRENGTH to accomplish – Phil.4:13

God is our strength, but we need to let Him win over our hearts first.

46:1c "A very present help in trouble" – The word "very," or "exceedingly," is added to qualify the whole proposition, as if this were "emphatically true." It was true in the most eminent sense that God had always been found to be such a helper, and, therefore, there was nothing to fear in the present distress of V2. The word "present" means as if He were near to us, or close by us. He has always "proved" Himself to be such a help, therefore, we may now confide in Him. God is presently helping us to bear trouble, to improve in it, and to survive in it. He's present through gracious communications and sweet manifestations; present most when He seems absent, restraining, overruling, and sanctifying us from trouble. Trust and wait (James Smith). The word "help" here *ezrah* – means aid, assistance. This word often speaks of military assistance, help with an enemy. A help found to be very powerful and effectual in strict and rigid; difficult situations. The word "trouble" – *tsarah* – literally a "tight spot" would cover all that can come upon us which would give us anxiety or sorrow. Sometimes the Lord allows trials in our lives to get our attention and to help us to grow spiritually. Sometimes trials are given to us to help us grow more dependent on the Lord and to help us to grow in our love for Him. Therefore, He is:

- ³Our REFUGE: Our only, impregnable, accessible, delightful place of retreat.

² http://www.childrenofdestiny.org/article_gainingthestrengthofthelord.asp

³ <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/tod/view.cgi?book=ps&chapter=046&verse=001>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

- Our STRENGTH: Our all sufficient, unconquerable, honourable, and emboldening strength.
- Our HELP: Ever near, sympathizing, faithful, real, and potent **is our God**.

46:2 Therefore will not we fear, – Our confidence in God shall be unshaken and abiding. Having Him for our refuge and strength Psalm 46:1, we can have nothing to fear. Israel will proceed in a reasonable manner, regardless of the situation around her, because she knows God is in her midst. We need not fear even if **46:2b ...though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;** —This may either mean, though the earth should change its place or its very structure in these convulsions; or, though it should perish altogether. Look at the mountains, the most fixed and firm things of earth, should be uprooted and sunk in the ocean - implying that nothing earthly was stable; or, the mountains here may be referred to as emblems of that which seemed to be most settled and established on earth - the kingdoms of the world. Israel will remain calm because God is "*Refuge & Strength*." The idea is, that in any convulsion, any change, any threatened danger, they would place confidence in God, who ruled over all, and who could not change.

46:3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. The word rendered "*be troubled*" means to boil; to ferment; to foam; and here referring to the ocean as agitated and lashed into foam. ⁴Evil may ferment, wrath may boil, and pride may foam, but the brave heart of holy confidence trembles not. Great men who are like mountains may quake for fear in times of great calamity, but the man whose trust is in God needs never to be dismayed. We will not fear, for God cannot be shaken.

"*Selah*"— As the Psalm of the sons of Korah pauses in the midst of such a hurly burly, the music gives the singers time to breathe, and ourselves time for meditation. The pause is not an exclamation of dismay, but merely a rest in music; we do not suspend our song in alarm, but tune our harps again with deliberation amidst the tumult of the storm.

PSALM 46:4-7 can be found in the lesson: [Seeking Refuge](#) dated October 17, 2010

Psalm 46:8-11 Wars Will Cease And God Will Be Exalted

46:8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. There is an invitation to... "*Come*" see the works of the Lord. His Works are...

1. Making desolation in the earth.

When the morning light broke, the joyful citizens of Jerusalem were invited to go view the remains of their enemies that they may see with what power Jehovah has undertaken in their behalf. God had completely devastated His enemy. The Lord defeated and disarmed His enemies and destroyed their weapons, and they could attack no more. However, this word not only characterizes God's past exploits, but it is also employed in various Day of the Lord contexts (e.g. Is.13:9; Hos.5:9; Zeph.2:15). Also there will surely be desolation in the earth caused by the seals, trumpets, and vials of Rev.6:12—9:21; 11:5-19; 16:1-21.

46:9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

2. Causing wars to cease.
3. Breaking the bow and cutting the spear in two.
4. Burns the chariot in the fire.

All the offensive weapons of the enemy were no match for God. The bow and the spear are no more. The war chariots, which were largely employed by the Assyrians and formed the main strength of the army of Sennacherib (2Kgs.19:23) were utterly destroyed by the power of His might. All of this, God wanted them to come and see His works.

46:10 Be still, and know that I am God: This is a familiar verse that gives us strength. These words appear to be addressed not to the enemy, but to Israel herself. It literally means to sink or to relax. It encourages the hearer to stop all struggle and find the peace of faith. Such peace comes only as we acknowledge God's Lordship in our lives and surrender to His will. After seeing all this desolation they were not to panic but to recognize the sovereignty of God.

46:10b ...I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. God will be exalted both to His nation and all other nations for warning. The heathen will come to exalt Him —" *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled,*

⁴ <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/tod/view.cgi?book=ps&chapter=046&verse=003>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" Is.2:11. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" Phil.2:10-11. This is the ultimate purpose for God in all the earth, to be exalted!

46:11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. He repeats this verse from verse 7. Jehovah of Hosts who is bringing this to pass, who is moving all things toward this culmination is with us. He's the God who made promises to us. He's the God of the Covenant. He's the God who has pledged to be faithful to His people. "He's the God of Jacob", another name for "God of the Jews". Because Jerusalem did not fall to Assyria, the Psalmist wrote, "The Lord of hosts (of everything) is with us". He meant that God was fighting for Jerusalem. Christians believe that God still fights for His people. He is the same God that the Psalmist called "the God of Jacob" and "the Lord of hosts; the Lord of everything".

SUMMARY:

Hebrew 11:1-3, 6: In order to have steadfast confidence, faith is brought into play. The substance of our faith is "now." It has to be solid confidence in something that has not been brought to light. You don't see it manifested in the natural but it's in the spirit. It's not in your hands yet but the Word of God says it will be. It's that confident assurance that will bring forth the evidence not seen. The elders walked by it. That's why they have a good report; they have testimony that it works. The worlds were even framed by it when God spoke it forth. They came from what was not even seen by the human eye but by God as He created the heavens and the earth; the spirit of God as He moved upon the face of the waters; and the light of Jesus shown forth to bring forth the manifestation of the Words spoken by faith. We understand this by faith even though we didn't witness it. No other could have framed the worlds with such enormity as God. It is truly impossible to even come to God or please Him if we didn't have faith in Him; that He is God. You could not even fake it because He would know it. You must believe that He is the One that can do all things no matter what it is if you expect to receive the reward of what you've asked for or what you've had confident assurance in. Seek means to look for His presence! His presence is in His Word; it's in the faith of what His Word promises; of what you haven't seen; of what you have spoken forth because it will be the same of what He has spoken forth for your life. Steadfast is unwavering and being committed because there will be a reward!

Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11 may have been a worshipful response to God's deliverance of Jerusalem from King Sennacherib's armies. We find a statement of confidence in the first scene, Psalm 46:1-3: God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble. So don't fear!

1. Though the earth be moved - God is not moved.
2. Though the mountains be shaken - God is never shaken.
3. Though all may fall - God stands.

God is still our refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble.

There is vindication for this statement of confidence is found in the third scene, Psalm 46:8-11: we have a reference to the mighty power of God as actually put forth in the desolations, which "He" had made in the earth. He had shown that power by making wars to cease; by breaking the bow, and cutting the spear in sunder; and by causing the war chariot to be burned in the fire. They had, therefore, nothing to fear while such a God was their Protector, and it was their duty calmly to confide in Him, and leave the whole issue with Him, for it was His purpose to exalt Himself among the nations of the earth. That's why He can say "BE STILL and KNOW that I AM GOD!"

⁵There were three stages of future vindication.

1. Judgment - Great Tribulation "What desolations he hath made in the earth." v.8
2. Establishing His Kingdom in peace. v.9
3. His exaltation throughout the earth. v.10

Jehovah of Hosts who is bringing this to pass, who is moving all things toward this culmination is with us. "He, the God of Jacob dwells in the midst of His people and has come to rescue us", seek refuge in Him.

APPLICATION:

Waiting for change? Believe God! If you can see what He has done, it causes you to see He can do it again. We can hold on to His strength to rescue us when desolations come.

⁵ http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/Chuck_Smith/sn/sermon.cfm?contentID=5051

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>