

Intro: Most of us have seen this image 100 times...I always have same reaction: "Why So Calm?" He is able to stand there with his hands in his pockets because he has FAITH in what he is standing on! That is the essence of what we are going to talk about this morning. As we continue to "unpack" our mission statement at RTBC today we are going to talk about REAL FAITH...WHAT it is...WHERE it comes from...WHY it makes a difference!

Mission Statement: "RTBC is REAL PEOPLE with REAL FAITH, building REAL COMMUNITY in order to TRANSFORM our world for Jesus Christ."

1. The Definition of REAL FAITH?

Heb 11:1

Faith is one of those church words we use all the time...but sometimes don't have a clear understanding of: The bible gives us that...it's a very clear...simple...uncomplicated definition...but needs to be looked at closely

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb 11:1 (KJV)

Let's work toward a biblical definition of faith ok?

- Faith: *Assurance of something; The belief in something; the confidence and conviction* (lighthouse)
- Substance: *Foundation on which something else stands*
(Building/Foundation: Contract/Law; Promise/Character)
- Evidence: *the settled conviction Proof or convincing argument;* (So settled, he has hands in pockets)

Here is what the author of Hebrews is saying. When you have faith, that faith imparts reality to the things that you cannot see! It gives substance and confidence to things that have not yet come to pass. Because of your faith, you FEEL, and you ACT and you have CONFIDENCE in that which you cannot see and has not yet taken place. FAITH

ILLUS: The lighthouse keeper cannot see the foundation of the lighthouse...but he has so much faith in it, he stands!

All of Heb 11 is a recounting of men and women who had faith in God to do what He promised. He spoke to what was not yet there...and they had the assurance and confidence it would come to pass. They STOOD on His Word, and His Character...and because God said it was so...that was all the evidence they needed.

Where does that come from? What creates...or Builds...or strengthens that kind of faith in our life?

- Word of God: Rom 1:17 *"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."* (READ/STUDY/MEMORIZE)
- Testimony of Others: We hear from others the reality of what THEY have experienced
- Evidence we see around us: We see others believe, act and show things that prove something is real
- Impact we see in others' lives: We see the difference something makes in the life of others.

Illus: We live that kind of faith every single day. How many of you BELIEVE, HAVE FAITH, SETTLED CONVICTION that a place call Beijing China exists in this world? How many of you actually have BEEN to Beijing China? WHY BELIEVE?

- Written in books, you talk to people who have been there, you see things brought back, see change they had
- You are willing to pay 1000's of dollars, get on a plane, fly 14 hours...because you believe! Testimony of others

When we say that RTBC is people with REAL FAITH, what we are saying is that we trust that the things we read in the bible, the things we hear God speaking to us, the things Jesus taught us...are REAL...Not some fiction...WHY? Because we find it in the Scripture, we hear from others that have experienced the reality, we see that it works...impacts!

2. The OPERATION of Real Faith.

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." Rom 1:17

Biblical faith is operational in our life in TWO very distinct ways. One we are much more familiar with than the other

- **Initial Faith:** When we put our faith in Jesus for salvation. The just shall live by faith. We have eternal life because we believe...we stand upon and have the settled conviction that Jesus died for OUR sins! All the world my crash around us...but we stand firm...IN HIM...because we trust what HE said...Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!
- **Ongoing Faith:** While our initial faith is a one-time thing...we have to live that out every single day. Every morning we have to wake up...and live by faith...that day...with those problems...facing whatever comes our way, standing in the confidence and conviction that God will get us through it. We have the ONE time initial faith and we also have the everyday...ongoing...moment by moment...decision by decision faith.

We have to have both because of a reality many of us overlook when we think about faith. There is a STRUGGLE!

3. The STRUGGLE Of Real Faith:

1 Tim 6:12

"Fight the good fight of the faith. (Ongoing) Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."(Initial)

Notice how Paul covers both aspects of faith. He encourages Timothy by saying, You started well, you made a public profession of faith before many people...but life isn't over then! NOW you have to live that out...and it is a BATTLE!

Illus: CS Lewis Screwtape Letters: A tongue in cheek account of how to keep a Christian from being effective!

- >Sometimes God is Growing us
- > Sometimes Life is stretching us
- >Sometimes Satan is Tempting us
- > Sometimes others disappoint and hurt us
- >Sometimes we make bad decisions (SLIDE)

Every one of these has something in common. Our faith is NOT EASY! It's a struggle and it will be until Jesus comes

4. The BUILDING UP of Real Faith.

Mark 9:24

The initial faith that we have for salvation is all that we need. Once we place our faith in Jesus eternity is secured and our future is certain. But, the reality of walking with Jesus in this world is that our ONGOING faith can be...and needs to be strengthened! We can grow in our faith. We can do things that strengthen it, make it more effective.

Mark 9:24 The disciples said to Jesus: *"Lord we believe...Help our unbelief!"* Lord we believe...grow our faith: MORE!

4 Things That Strengthen Our Faith

- Feed it the word of God: Rom 19:17 *"Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ"*
- Exercise it regularly: Mt 11:24 *"Faith like a mustard seed" Start small...grow larger!*
- Intentionally Strengthen it: 2Pet 1:5-7 *"Every effort to add to your faith!"*
- Be with those that support and help Rom 1:11-12 *"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong, that is that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith!"*

5. The Evidence Of Real Faith:

James 2:17

EVIDENCE OF FAITH IS ACTION: *"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."* Jms 2:17

Go back and Look at Heb 11 this afternoon and notice that every single one of the examples there had an ACTION associated with it! In our world today we have substituted the word BELIEVE for the word FAITH. NOT THE SAME!

I can believe something...and have it merely be an intellectual agreement and assent. FAITH REQUIRES ACTION!

Illus: Pete's testimony. I want to believe...He had to take the ACTION of praying...then had to be PUBLIC! REAL FAITH

- Noah built an Ark! > Abraham left his home >Abraham offered Isaac
- Israel walked through the Red Sea > Stepped into raging Jordan >Rahab hid spies in land risked her life

You see, REAL FAITH is action based. It isn't something that you just SAY...Faith is ACTED ON...LIVED OUT...

And every time you try to live out your faith...it is a Struggle! Doesn't come easy! Always stretches you!

6. The OUTCOME of Real Faith.

Heb 11:6

When we have REAL FAITH...A faith that is grounded in Jesus, a faith that functions every day, a faith that overcomes struggles and is being built up, a faith that results in ACTION...we see some incredible results! Two Outcomes.

- First, God is pleased! Heb 11:6 *"We believe that He exists, and he REWARDS those that seek Him!"* God operates in the life of those that trust Him to do amazing things! What you see in Heb 11! Heros of faith
- We are blessed! 1John 5:5: *"Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God!"* When we believe...when we have Real Faith: We find in and through that faith the ability to live in a world that opposes us with everything it can the confident assurance to overcome. We CAN win the battle with a faith that is REAL! We can stand in the middle of the most awful circumstances...Light Keeper!

CONCL: You hear all of that and you say to me: *"Pastor...that's awesome...I just don't have that much faith!"*

"It is not necessary to have great faith; even small faith is enough, as long as it is faith in a great God!" Leon Morris

"It is not the amount of faith that brings the impossible within reach, but the power of God which is available to even the smallest faith!" RT France

- Have YOU trusted Christ initially: Have you put your faith in Him: Not Intellectually: Taken Action: Pray, Walk
 - Are you Growing in your faith? Are you DOING what you need to do to Build it Strong: No? Always Struggle!
1. Come today...to me...to the altar...to the prayer tent...and accept Jesus: Stand up...Be Public
 2. Make the changes YOU need to Make: Feed Faith the Word, Take Action to Stretch, Step Out...Trust God!