*Introduction*

Over the past couple of weeks we have looked at "What sort of people are we to be" and that we need to learn from the misfortunes of others as they may be warnings to us.

As Christians we have got to make the choice to wholeheartedly follow Jesus.

We cannot wallow on the fence of indecision, for that in itself is a decision to be half hearted. We cannot be lukewarm.

We have to walk in faith.

In our reading this morning it clearly says:

***Heb 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.***

So, DV, we are going to look, over the next few weeks, with the exception of other speakers, at the subject of Faith, and see what it is, and what it is NOT. How we get faith and how it grows.

Why? Because faith is vitally important to you and I, and without it you cannot please God or know God.

This morning we are going to start by looking at FAITH v SIGHT.

FAITH is a short, simple word with a lot of potential.

In fact its potential is made known to us by two statements that Jesus made:
***MATT 19:26Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”***

***Mark 9:23“‘If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”***

Both these passages state that "all things are possible". The first passage applies to God, after all, He is Sovereign and the creator and sustainer of all things. Therefore everything is possible with God.

The second statement applies to the one who believes.

In practical terms, what does this mean?

It means that, through faith, the things that are possible to God are made equally possible to the one who believes.

Faith is the channel that makes God's possibilities available to us.

No wonder the Bible, from beginning to end emphasises the importance of Faith.

In fact Jesus again spoke:

***MATT 17:20He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”***

Before we move on to look at Faith v Sight, we need to have a definition of what Faith is. Hebrews 11 deals exclusively with the subject of faith and provides us with a definition.

***Heb 11:1 (NIV)Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.***

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

Now this verse tells us two things:

1.Faith is so real it is called a 'substance' and to combine the two translations, it can be said that Faith is so real it is a substance that we can have absolute confidence in.

The Greek word for 'substance' is *hupostasis* which literally means "that which stands under" something else or "provides the basis for" something else.

Now why do I tell you this?

Because if you go to **Hebrews 1:3** you see the same word *hupostasis* being used to explain the nature of the Father IN JESUS.

***NKJV 3who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,***

***NIV 3 The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.***

The meaning of this is that the Father is the eternal, invisible, underlying reality - of which Jesus is the visible expression.

When we apply this to Hebrews 11:1 we can say that Faith is the underlying reality of things hoped for. Faith is real, it is a substance.

2. Faith is ***the evidence of things not seen.***

Which ever translation you use, the point is that faith deals with things that we cannot see. Faith relates to the invisible.

The writer goes on to stress this point in v3

***HEB 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.***

There is a contrast to the things that are seen and the things that are not seen.

Our senses connect us to the visible world - "what is seen"

But FAITH takes us behind the visible to the invisible - to the underlying reality by which the whole universe was formed, that is, the reality of the Word of God.

Those invisible realities are God himself and His Word.

Biblical faith has only these two objects.

In a secular context we speak of faith in many ways:

Faith in the economy

Faith in our political leader

Faith in our car etc.

But in Scripture it is exclusive to two realities that are invisible to the natural eye - God and His Word.

Now having laid that foundation, we come to our subject which is Faith v Sight.

The Apostle Paul brings out the opposition between faith and sight in the 2nd book of Corinthians.

***2 Cor 5:4-9For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.***

***6Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7For we live by faith, not by sight. 8We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.***

Now the world will say "Seeing is believing" but the Bible reverses this saying - First we must believe, then we will see. This goes against our natural thinking. But it is so important.

**Psalm 27:13(NKJV) I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living**

If David had just seen he would not have believed, but he believed first and then could see.

***Heb 11:27 (NIV)  By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible***

Moses had nothing in his 'visible' circumstances that would give him hope or encouragement. But he endured despite all this because he believed - saw the invisible God.

Jesus himself also said to Martha

***John 11:39-40“Take away the stone,” he said.“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”***

There is a conflict between our old nature and our new nature. The old nature demands to *see*, since it lives by the senses. But the new nature says "I am content not to see, I do not walk by sight, but by faith".

We are challenged once again by the contrast between the visible and the invisible by Paul

***2 Cor 4:17-18 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.  So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.***

Paul's language in these verses contains a deliberate paradox. He speaks of looking at things that are not seen.

How can we do this? There is only one way - by faith!

In the purposes of God, affliction serves a useful purpose for believers. It forms and strengthens us Character and prepares us for the eternal glory that lies ahead.

But affliction only serves us if we fix our eyes on the unseen. If we take our eyes off the unseen and look at the world with our senses, we will become preoccupied with the world and loose the benefits that come from God through our circumstances.

***Rom 8:26-28In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who] have been called according to his purpose.***

*Conclusion*

At this moment we are caught between two worlds, the temporal and the eternal.

The temporal is what we see, we contact it with our senses. But the eternal is the world God wants us to be at home in. We can only be at home in that world by faith. Faith is the one thing that connects us with the unseen realities of God and His Word.

Faith lifts us above the realm of our own abilities and makes God's possibilities available to us, it connects us to Himself and His Word.

Through faith we can overcome hardships and tests that confront us daily and make them into opportunities for God to reveal His goodness and His glory.

With God all things are possible, and all things are possible to those who believe.

Believe in God and His promises and power and then see. as you do, you will walk by faith.

Amen