*Introduction*

Last week we began looking at Faith. We looked at Faith v Sight, seeing that the world would have us see then believe, but the Bible calls us to believe in order to see.

Faith was about looking past the trouble we may be going through to the Sovereign God who works all things to the good of those who love him.

This morning we are going to look at Faith v Hope.

There is a great misunderstanding between faith and hope amongst Christians today. Many Christians are disappointed and frustrated with their prayer life because they do not receive what they believe they should.

Often that is because they are praying in hope, but not in faith.

The results promised by God to faith are not promised to hope.

So we need to look at the difference between Faith and hope and how we can tell them apart if we are to understand.

We are going to see this morning that there are 2 main differences between faith and hope, which, I hope, will aid our understanding and help us in our Christian lives.

The first difference between Faith and Hope is

1. Faith is in the heart, Hope is in the mind.

***ROM 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.***

True biblical faith originates in the heart. in this verse it is expressed in the word 'believe' and it produces 'justification'. Faith changes us.

It is belief in action.

A person who only accepts something as true with his intellect can remain unchanged by it.

Mental acceptance of truth is not faith.

To produce faith, truth must penetrate beyond the conscious mind into the inner centre and source of life, the heart.

Truth that stays in the mind will be sterile and ineffective - it just sits there, but truth received into the heart is dynamic and life changing - it is faith.

If you truly believe - you will be changed by what you believe.

***Prov 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.***

The Bible clearly shows us here that everything that finally decides the course of our lives proceeds from the heart and determines the way we live.

It is not just a concept in the mind it is a real, active force at work in the heart.

However God does not leave the mind without its proper provision.

Faith at work in the heart produces hope in the mind.

We saw this last week in our definition from Hebrews 11:1

***Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.***

or as the KJV puts it

***Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.***

Faith in the heart is the substance, the confidence we have in the underlying reality.

This produces a valid, scriptural basis for the hope that we have in our minds.

Paul, again shows us the difference between the two when he talks of the armour of God.

***1 Thess 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.***

In making a distinction between faith and hope, I am not belittling hope. Hope is, in a Biblical sense, a confident expectation of good - a steady, persistent optimism.

Hope protects our minds.

Every Christian should have hope - 24 hours a day. If we lay aside the helmet of hope that guards our minds, we begin to dwell on negative thoughts and gloom and we leave ourselves open to the subtle attacks of the devil, and we know that he will attack us at our most vulnerable points.

The Christian hope is not fanciful or unrealistic or wishful thinking, but should be based on the promises of god found in the Scriptures

For example, Romans 8:28

***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.***

If God is working all things for my good, there is no room left in my mind except for optimism.

But... if we are to apply this verse to our lives, we need to make sure that we are meeting the conditions of the verse.

Do we truly love God?

Are we seeking to fulfil his purpose for our lives?

If so, then God is working all things - every event, every situation - together for our good.

In light of this, if you are a Christian and a pessimist - you are denying your faith

Faith and hope = optimism.

This confirms what we have already said: Faith is the only solid basis for hope.

So, hope that is based on genuine faith from the heart will not disappoint us. But hope that comes from the mind alone will.

2. Faith is in the present, hope is in the future

It is easy for us to confuse faith with hope, as we have already seen.

Sometimes we get a feeling of expectation and we call it faith but its really just a hope, its something that is coming from the mind and does not have any basis of faith, and that expectation does not see the results we expect.

Faith is not about feelings.

Hope is not about feelings either.

Feelings go up and down, hot and cold, it is a mind condition if you like.

Many Christians say "I believe that God will heal me", what they are really saying is "I hope that He will heal me tomorrow"

This is not faith, for faith is not for tomorrow, faith is something that we have now.

If we keep directing our expectation toward the future, we are substituting hope for faith.

One of the Devils tricks is not to come at you and flatly say "You will not be healed" or "that loved one will not be saved". If he did, we would not listen to him.

But his ploy is to say "You will get what you are seeking, but not today, tomorrow" and we listen to him and therefore never get to the moment of obtaining what we are seeking.

We have hope (for tomorrow) but we do not have faith.

However, God does not put us off until tomorrow.

***2 Cor 6:2For he says, “In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation***

God lives in the eternal NOW.

To faith, He never reveals himself as "I was" or as "I will be", but always as "I am".

When faith contacts God it is always in the present.

If we apply this truth to our prayer lives it will revolutionise what we ask for - and get!

***Mark 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.***

In faith, we ask now and we receive now, it is ours. This does not mean that we actually, physically receive everything straight away. The phrase "and it will be yours" is a future tense.

But in faith we have received it NOW - but it will be given at Gods appointed time.

Faith will receive now, the manifestation of what we have received will be in the future.

***HEB 4:3Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,“So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”***

***And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world***

So we come back to Faith is believing before seeing - but the seeing will come because it has already been granted to us and therefore we do not need to worry about it, we can have peace and rest about it. Gods works have been finished since before the creation of the world.

Gods salvation plan was 'finished' before the creation of the world, yet it didn't actually happen for 4000 years. I was saved before the creation of the world, but it didn't actually happen until 1974

Do you see the difference.

*Conclusion*

Faith and hope are closely related, yet they have two very important differences:

Faith comes from the heart, but hope is in the mind.

Faith is in the present, but hope is in the future. It is an expectation of things to come.

Faith is believing that Jesus Messiah will return, our hope is the expectation of this great event.

Hope that is based on true faith will never disappoint us, but if we do not have faith, our hopes are without foundation and they will frustrate us.

Hope is Gods appointed protection for our minds, but it will not obtain the results promised to us through faith

The key to obtaining what we ask for from God (in His will), is to receive it by faith at the very moment we ask for it.

Knowing that it is a done deal. The granting of which may come in the future, or at that same time.

Doing this sets us free from continual struggle and anxiety, and brings us into His rest and peace.

Amen.