Introduction

Welcome this brisk June morning at our changed venue at Forest Hill. It is just for today. Next week we are back at our usual venue – the Laidley Cultural Centre Function Room. Each year a long standing annual booking forces us to relocate. I want to say thanks to the Forest Hill School of Arts management for allowing us to use this building, and thank you to Desley for organising the change of venue.

Illustration (from the General Superintendent QB)

I was walking down the street the other day when I saw my best friend Jeff. I walked up to him and mentioned that I had the craziest dream the other night. Jeff listened as I told him that the dream consisted of just one thing. A huge glowing number "5". It was made of gold and sparkled with shiny diamonds. Jeff's curiosity was peaked. I went on to say that the first thing that I did in the morning was to grab the daily racing digest and look up the 5th race.

Jeff raised an eyebrow. I told him that the #5 horse in the 5th race was named "The 5th Element." Jeff started grinning. Then I told him point-by-point what I did that entire day.

I ate 5 bowls of cereal for breakfast and drank 5 cups of coffee.
I went for a 5 kilometre jog to clear my head
I took a 5 minute shower to rinse off
I dressed in the 5th suit I found in my cupboard
I sat in my car for 5 minutes before starting it
I drove to the racetrack and parked in the 5th stall in the 5th row
I entered through the 5th admissions gate
I bought 5 programs
I went to the 5th betting window and bet $555 on the 5th horse in the 5th race
I went and sat in the 5th row of the bleachers making sure there were 5 people sitting on both sides of me.

I settled in and waited for the race to start

"Well," said Jeff. "Did your horse win??"

I frowned at Jeff and said, "Stupid horse came in 5th."

How do you make decisions in life? Do you have faith in a God who created us and loved us? Or do you have another method. Do you read/believe the Horoscopes in your local paper? Do you have a lucky charm? Do you trust your gut? (My gut is filled with some pretty awful things & smells! Not sure if I would trust that.)

**How do you make decisions in life? How's your faith?** Do you have faith to follow God in life? I had a chap in my previous Church who used to always say ‘God’s Word, the Bible says it, so by faith I believe it!’

The Scriptures in Hebrews 11 tell us that:

‘without faith it's impossible to please God’ (Hebrews 11:6).

Jesus mentions that ‘if you have the faith of one of the smallest seeds – a mustard seed – then you can move mountains’ (Matthew 17:20).

We are also instructed by the Apostle Paul to ‘walk by faith, not by sight’ (2 Cor. 5:7).

Today we are looking at the 11th Chapter of Hebrews – it’s the Faith Chapter. Before we start I want to show a clip from the ‘Indiana Jones & the Last Crusade’ movie. Indiana’s Father is dying and he must reach him as quickly as possible. He has the answer in the book, but he just has to trust that it is true & right. Let’s watch and see what happens.

**Media Clip** – **Indiana Jones (Step of Faith)** – 2 mins.
Great clip. I’m sorry we don’t have time to watch more of the movie. Before we open God’s Word, let’s ask God to reveal his will for us today. **Let’s pray.**

**Gracious God & our Heavenly Father,**

*You are calling us to a life of faith. If we believe by faith in you and in your Son, Jesus, you have promised to give us life everlasting. Show us again today how important having a faith in you is. It will save our lives and provide us with a safe and sure anchor in life, something that most of this world needs.*

*Speak into our hearts as we listen to your voice today. Challenge us to model faith to our children, our families and friends, and in doing so teach the world around us about You. May your Holy Spirit strengthen and encourage us right now as we open your Word. In the Holy name of Jesus your son. Amen*

**Grab your Bibles - let’s read Hebrews Chapter 11 together**

What does it mean to have faith or to be a people of faith? What is this thing called faith? What are we to put our faith in? Well, we are told exactly what faith is in this Chapter.

We finished in Hebrews Chapter 10 last week by being told that we are to be people of faith – not shrinking back, but because of what Jesus has done, we are to have faith and to be saved.

Being a follower of Jesus is to have faith. To follow Christ - the only way to do that is to have faith. How do you tell that you have faith/have a faith?

**What is the evidence of the life of faith?** Well, Hebrews 11 answers this question.

**Hebrews 11 - The Evidence of the Life of Faith**

Because the Old Testament Saints exercised faith, to live a life that departs from faith is to depart from the Old Testament saints.

In Chapter 10 last week I spoke about patient endurance – this Chapter gives us many examples of how people exercised this patient endurance. They only won the battle through their patient endurance, and therefore the believers that the writer of Hebrews is addressing in this Epistle, must win the battle in the same way.

Back in Hebrews 6:12 the writer stated – “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” Chapter 11 gives them many examples of those whom the readers can imitate.

The key word for Chapter 11 of Hebrews is **faith.** It is used 24 times in this Chapter.
The Endurance of faith (v1-3)

The first 3 verse talk about the endurance of faith. We get a description (not a definition) of faith – ‘Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see’. This is not a description of saving faith, but a principle that deals with the what is still in the future and unseen. We can only take the future in faith. The only reason we can do this is the fact that Creation must be taken by faith.

Faith looks forward, anticipates the things hoped for. The future is not yet realized, that’s why patient endurance (we spoke about this last week) is so important. The one who lives by faith will be one who patiently endures.

Faith is assurance or confidence – the meaning here is to have a real guarantee or proof. It was used in ancient documents as evidence of title deeds – having legitimate ownership. So it is the real essence, the real deal, the guarantee/absolute certainty of what is coming to you. What is coming for us – the blessings of the Messiah’s return, the guarantee of Spiritual Maturity, entrance into heavenly rest, future glorification – what a future the believer has to look forward to!!

If you are a person of faith, you live out your belief, you live out your faith. It’s what your mind and spirit is convinced is true. They might be things yet unseen, but they are really there. They are made real through faith.

Faith gives substance to things hoped for and demonstrates provable reality to things unseen. If you are a believer today, then your life is lived in the assurance of another reality, a reality outside of our experience. We can’t see it, but we’re convinced of it ... by faith.

History proves that you can live this way. All the Old Testament saints that are listed shortly in this passage is evidence of this. Others later were witnesses of this fact. They observed that their faith was genuine and real. They received a promise from God, they claimed it, and then patiently endured and waited until the promise was received.

Verse 3 – Creation is one thing that must be accepted by faith. Is it coincidence that one year ago we were in this same hall listening to John Mackay talk to us about Creation? No one has a record of the creation of this universe. Moses wasn’t around to record it. Exercising faith in a past event. Something coming out of nothing. It’s one of the questions that stumps scientists – where did all this stuff (planets, suns, galaxies, mass) come from?

We know creation occurred – we are living in it. We didn’t see it, but we believe it. Believing it occurred imposes a responsibility of faith in a Creator (also One who is unseen). Genuine faith produces genuine knowledge that the worlds came into existence through the very spoken Word of God (reima). God spoke – it all
appeared! Created out of nothing. God’s power through his creation calls upon all to believe it by faith.

Yes, faith looks forward to the unseen, but it also looks backward to the unseen. In this case, we haven’t seen God, but know that He exists. How? Creation bears testimony to His existence.

The Examples of faith (v4-40)
The rest of the Chapter looks at examples of faith.

Faith in the Pre-patriarchal Period (v4-7)
Cain & Abel (v4) – Cain is an example of one who thinks he can choose his own way to God. Abel is the example of one who chooses God’s way to approach Him. It wasn’t the blood sacrifice that made him righteous, but his faith as he brought his sacrifice. A better sacrifice – we’ve spoken a bit about that in previous weeks. Abel is a great example of a life worshipping in faith.

Enoch (v5-6) – lived a life that was pleasing to God. He was there, and then he wasn’t any more. Godtranslated him from earth to Heaven. It is a concept of being raptured from earth to Heaven. God bore witness to his life of faith. Enoch is a good example of walking in faith.

Noah (v7) – exercised faith through obedience through preparing an ark to save his household. He was warned by God of things yet unseen. Up till that time it had never rained upon the earth, and there had certainly never been any flood. People had never seen water coming down from the heavens. God said it would happen and Noah believed God. He showed faith by building an ark. God imparted righteousness to Noah. He is a good example of the obedience of faith.

The Faith of the Patriarchs (v8-22)
A lot of this section deals with Abraham (v8-19) – the very act of departing your country showed Abraham’s faith. He obeyed (immediately) and went to a new and strange place where afterward he would receive a future inheritance. He didn’t know where he was going. He only knew that God was telling him to go (to a land that He would show him) in Genesis 12. In other words Abraham was to keep walking until God told him to stop. And do Abraham shows the pilgrimage of faith. He came as a stranger – that takes faith. He lived in tents until he died.
Abraham received the Covenant – something to be fulfilled later, beyond the grave. One day he would own the land. He looked forward to the Heavenly Jerusalem. It shows also his patient endurance.

Verse 11-12 talks about the faith of his wife Sarah. By faith she conceived. By Abraham’s faith Sarah conceived, even though they were both past the age of doing so. Sarah was past the child-bearing years. But it was by faith that they had Isaac. Genesis 16 – visitation by God and then patiently enduring until it was fulfilled.

Verse 12 says that Abraham was as ‘good as dead’. He was sterile, but because of his faith, he would become the father of multitudes, the Father of the Jewish nation and the Father of many other Arab states. Innumerable descendants – by faith.

Verse 13 – the Patriarchs died out and the promises were not fulfilled in their lifetime. They didn’t see them, but they were willing to live their present lives waiting for their reward in the next. Living as foreigners in strange lands without citizenship rights, no permanent possessions. But they were seeking for a better city and a better country of their own. They will receive it in another lifetime – in the Millennium when the promise will be fulfilled. Many will come from north, south, east and west to recline with Abraham, Isaac & Jacob in the Promised Land (Matthew 8:11).

**Verse 15 – a life of faith is a willingness to give up past achievements and comforts and live out the rest of life in discomfort for the sake of a better promise.**

The Patriarchs knew that one day they would receive a better country – the Heavenly Jerusalem. So they stayed put, they were willing to wait, and not go backwards. They had no desire to go back to where they came from. As a result God was not ashamed to call them his brothers.

Verses 17-19 – Abraham’s willingness to offer up his son Isaac. Asked by God to kill the one who was supposed to inherit this Promise. Imagine being Abraham and knowing that God had promised the inheritance to this only son. Why was Abraham so willing to kill Isaac? Verse 19 gives the answer – his faith rested on the creative power of God. He knew that God was able to raise Isaac up, even from the dead. Abraham didn’t flinch when he raised the knife to slay his son. He knew that God was obliged to raise Isaac to fulfil his promise through him.

Verse 20 – by faith Jacob & Esau were blessed. Future blessings that predicted things for Jacob & Esau - by faith Isaac knew that they would come to pass. A great example of future faith, faith concerning future things.
Faith in the Wilderness Sojourn (v23-31)

This section deals with Moses & shows various decisions of faith.

The faith of Moses’ parents (v23). Risking their lives for 3 months by hiding him. They knew God had a special plan for their son, in spite of the King’s commandment.

**Faith works despite adversity and faith accepts God’s plan.**

Verses 24-28 – Moses’ faith was personal. He decided at 40 not to be associated with the Egyptians, but wanted to be identified with his own Jewish people. He gave up his position as a royal prince.

**Faith sometimes will have to reject worldly honour & worldly pleasures.**

Moses chose to identify with the ill treatment of God’s people. They were treated as slaves, BUT they were God’s people. He chose to identify with the reproach of Christ. He was a type of the future Messiah. Moses suffered just as the Messiah would have to suffer. He desires spiritual treasures rather than physical ones.

**Faith sometimes requires the rejection of the world’s riches.**

Moses’ faith was public (v27-28). He didn’t fear the king. By faith in God, he keeps the original Passover. He firmly believed by faith that the sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts etc. would save the Jewish firstborn.

**Faith obeys the details of God’s Word.**

Verse 29-30 – shows the faith of the Israelite people. They overcame natural obstacles (e.g. The Red Sea).

**Faith is willing to do what is unnatural.**

By faith, the walls of Jericho fell. By faith they marched around for 7 days. This was not a normal way to attack a city. Faith overcomes enemies.

**Faith will sometimes require one to do what seems unnatural and illogical.**

The Wilderness wanderings started with the crossing of the Red Sea and ends with the collapse of the walls of Jericho. The writer of Hebrews is showing these 2 acts of faith as bookends for their whole wilderness journey of faith. They showed faith in the beginning, and faith in the end. Yes, they showed lack of faith during these
wanderings. As we saw in Hebrews 3-4 this lack of obedience brought physical death and failure. But here he points out that there was also faith.

Verse 31 deals with the faith of Rahab the harlot. She showed her faith by receiving the spies with peace. Others knew what she knew but they didn’t obey. So they perished. The Canaanites knew what had happened in Egypt and the Exodus and the wilderness etc. How did they respond? Rahab responded by obeying and therefore her family were spared (and she forms part of the Messiah’s line).

**Faith in Trials (v32-38)**

Verse 32 – what more shall I say? (Note - the masculine here rules out Priscilla as the author of this book). He could give many more examples, but he is running out of time. All these other people listed are examples of courage and faith.

The point he is making is that faith is associated with trials. It is natural for faith to be tested (just have a look at the Book of James, following Hebrews).

**Since it is natural for faith to be tested, trials should not nullify faith. Trials should strengthen faith for trials bring more faith.**

Verses 32-34 show that faith extended throughout the entire history of Israel. He picks out various representatives – Judges, Kings, Prophets.

Faith brought about national victories.

Faith brought about personal deliverance (e.g. Daniel, Samson & David).

Faith brought about personal gifts and attainments.

Verses 35-38 shows that faith even triumphs over death. It pinnacles over death. The Widow of Zarephath (raised by Elijah); the Shunnamite woman (son raised by Elisha); the widow of Nain (son raised by Jesus); Lazarus (raised by Jesus).

God has a better resurrection, an immortal one. These who showed faith did not take the easy way out. They could’ve renounced their faith, they were given that option, but they chose to die so that they might obtain a better resurrection. All of these had faith.

The triumph unto death caused a higher victory – a triumph over death. He lists various sufferings because of their faith. Mockings, scourgings, imprisonment, stoned, sawn in half, tempted, slain with the sword, afflicted, wandered, destitute. And then it says that the world was not worthy. All of these people had similarities with the readers of Hebrews. They too were being treated this way, ostracized,
reduced to poverty, mocked, thrown into prison etc. But no one of these readers yet had given his life for his faith.

**The Victory of Faith (v39-40)**

So the writer of Hebrews finishes with a great conclusion – the victory of faith.

**All who have had faith and have shown their faith will have a share in the kingdom.**

They have all waited patiently for the New Kingdom. The readers here also must have patient endurance until they see the fulfilment. It is in the future. Not in their lifetime probably. The Old Testament saints will not receive the fulfilment of the promise until the New Kingdom. But they bore witness to it by their faith. They saw the future promises and they died in faith.

**They still possessed their faith when they died.**

There is something waiting for all believers in the future. We will all reach perfection together. We will all receive our ultimate sanctification and glorification at the Second Coming of Jesus. By then all the faithful will be resurrected.

So, the Old Testament saints are the people the readers are to imitate. They persevered through their trials and disappointments by means of patient endurance – the evidence of their faith.

The author has pointed out many times that these readers have faith. Now they have to exercise that faith by showing patient endurance, just like these wonderful examples of courage of faith listed in this Chapter.

**CONCLUSION**

We’ve just touched the surface of the topic of faith. I hope you’ve caught a glimpse of what that looks like to us a believers.

I want to finish with a clip that will encourage you. There are many people of faith that are mentioned in the Bible, in Hebrews 11. There are also many who are not listed but equally ran the life of faith with courage and finished.

The clip is called the March of the Unqualified. It goes for 2 minutes.

**Media Clip – March of the Unqualified** *(2 mins)*
How do you feel knowing that God can choose anyone. You don’t even have to be qualified. All you have to do is to have faith. God can and will use you if you put your life … everything … into His hands. Are you ready to get in line?

What does that mean for us, the Laidley Baptist Church, today?

We are faced, like the Hebrew readers, with a decision that involves faith. We have been seeking God as a Church about the possibility of the right block of land to build a new Church. Bill spoke to us last week in the meeting after Church and challenged us to have faith.

Corporately, for us as a Church, it might be easy to say, 'Well we need to have more faith together', but if we are to do that, each one of us needs to examine our faith. If each one of us professes to be a disciple of Jesus then we need to trust Him no matter what.

Forget about trusting in yourself, or your logic, or your agenda or some gut feeling or twisted advice. We need to get out of our comfort boat and learn to walk on water. God is calling us right now as we wait on Him to be a people of real faith. To take the step into the unknown just like Indy in the opening clip.

I’m not really sure that we know what we have in our hands right now – an opportunity to change the next generation and therefore impact the nation. To be leaders in this community. Leaders with the real answer – Jesus.

As we prepare for this, we will need to exercise the ‘muscle’ of faith in the ministries that God is calling us to, so that we can impact & change our whole area for Christ. Wouldn’t it be great when we get to heaven there’s an area where we recognize a group of people gathered excitedly talking. When we get a bit closer and start talking to a few we sort of recognize a few of this entire group of a couple of thousand saints in heaven. When we ask them where they are from, they say that they are all from Laidley in Qld. Australia, and they put their trust in Jesus because of the ministry of ‘so and so’, or they heard the Good News from ‘so and so’, or were ministered to by the love of ‘so and so’ from the Baptist Church. They all heard about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, because of the faithful witness of faith-filled people from this Church.

Apart from all my family in heaven with Jesus for eternity, I can’t think of any better reward than seeing this entire town in heaven. You see, that’s what you & I have been called to, for such a time as this.
It’s an exciting time to have faith. It’s an exciting time to trust God completely. Perhaps you have been wavering in your faith, and you want to come closer to God and trust Him more.

I want to pray for all of us to have more faith, just like in Hebrews 11 – through the wilderness, through the trials, and to grasp the victory we have in Jesus through faith in Him.

**Let’s Pray …**

*Gracious God & our Heavenly Father,*

*Just like the Old Testament saints and those who have gone before us, may you establish us as a people of faith for our generation for this area. Thank you for your encouragement through your Word, just as you encouraged believers in the early Church. Thank you for the victory that is ours through faith in Jesus. Victory over the grave and over our sin, and the wonderful fulfilment of our glorification when we meet you face to face. Help us now to patiently endure through this life, built on the foundation of our faith in One who has endured everything on our behalf. Thank you Jesus for your life of faith, and for showing us the way to the Father.*

*Use us this week to be examples of faith to others. Strengthen our faith for the week ahead.*

*We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

**Closing Song ~ Faith of our Fathers**

Next weekend I will be away. Bill Aland will be our speaker. Bill will be speaking from John 21. We are back in the Cultural Centre (with the heaters). Have a wonderful week with the Lord, walking by faith, not by sight.
Faith in Action

1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

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.

4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 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.

7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.
13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

23 By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.

24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.
29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.