Sermon: Faith, Grace, and the Power to Live for God

Scripture Readings:

 \* Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

 \* Romans 1:5-6: "Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."

 \* Philippians 2:13: "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

 \* Romans 6:14: "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

Introduction

Have you ever felt the weight of expectation? The pressure to measure up, to perform, to be good enough? Perhaps it's in your job, your relationships, or even in your spiritual life. We often carry this silent burden, believing that if we just try harder, if we just obey more perfectly, then we will earn approval, earn love, or earn God's favor.

But what if I told you that the Christian life doesn't begin with our striving, but with God's giving? What if the very desire to please God, the will to follow Him, and the power to live for Him, all originate not in us, but in Him?

Today, we're going to explore this profound truth by connecting three powerful passages of Scripture: Hebrews 11:1, Romans 1:5-6, and the overarching theme of God's grace. We’ll see how God’s grace is the foundation for everything, how faith is our response to that grace, and how true obedience flows not from legalistic striving, but from a heart transformed by divine power.

I. Defining Faith: The Assurance of the Unseen (Hebrews 11:1)

Our journey begins with one of the most famous definitions of faith in the Bible, Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

This verse tells us two crucial things about faith:

 \* It's confidence in what we hope for: This isn't wishful thinking. It’s a deep, settled conviction that what God has promised, what we genuinely hope for, will indeed come to pass. Think about Abraham, hoping for a son in his old age, or Noah, building an ark for a flood no one had ever seen. They acted on a future reality, not yet visible.

 \* It's assurance about what we do not see: Faith gives us a firm conviction, an inner evidence, of things that are currently unseen. This includes spiritual realities like God's very existence, His character, His love, and the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. We didn't see it with our physical eyes, but by faith, we are certain of its truth and power.

This faith is not a blind leap into the dark; it's a confident step into the light based on the trustworthiness of God. It's a conviction about unseen realities that shapes our lives in the present.

II. The Call to Obedience from Faith (Romans 1:5-6)

Now, how does this profound understanding of faith connect to our lives and actions? Romans 1:5-6 provides the link. Paul writes: "Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."

Notice that vital phrase: "the obedience that comes from faith."

 \* Not obedience to earn faith, but obedience that results from faith. This is a critical distinction. Our obedience does not earn us salvation or God's favor. Instead, genuine faith – the kind described in Hebrews 11:1, a deep confidence in God and His unseen promises – naturally leads to a life of obedience. When we truly believe who God is and what He has done for us, our hearts are transformed, and our desire is to align our lives with His will.

 \* A Universal Call: Paul then says, "And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ." This isn't just a call for apostles or for a select group. It's a universal call to everyone who hears the gospel – a divine invitation to belong to Jesus Christ. This belonging is the ultimate expression of the "obedience that comes from faith." It means surrendering our lives to Him out of trust.

So, faith is the root, and obedience is the fruit. But how do we get this faith? And why is our obedience different from trying to keep a strict set of rules? This brings us to the pivotal role of grace.

III. The Foundation of Grace: Not Under Law, But Under Grace (Romans 6:14)

This leads us to the heart of the New Testament message: Grace. The Bible tells us in Romans 6:14: "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

This is crucial because it addresses the problem of "the law":

 \* The Law Revealed Our Inability: The Law (like the Ten Commandments) is holy and good. It reveals God's perfect standards. But it also reveals our utter inability to meet those standards. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Trying to earn God's favor through perfectly keeping the law is a futile, burdensome task that only leads to condemnation.

 \* Grace is God's Undeserved Favor: Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve and could never earn. It’s a free gift, offered through Jesus Christ. Romans 3:24 tells us, "and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

 \* Faith is How We Receive Grace: We don't work for grace; we receive it by faith. Faith (the "confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see") is the hand that takes hold of God's free gift of salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9 beautifully states, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

So, we are not under the condemning power of the law, which highlights our failures. We are under grace, which extends forgiveness, new life, and empowerment through Christ.

IV. The Divine Source of Desire, Will, and Power (Philippians 2:13)

This brings us full circle to the profound truth we began with: "it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

This verse, in light of everything we’ve discussed, illuminates how all of this ties together:

 \* God Gives the Desire: Left to ourselves, our desires are often for sin, for self, for everything but God. But it is God's grace that first awakens any spiritual desire within us. He draws us, He convicts us, He stirs our hearts. The "confidence in what we hope for" (Hebrews 11:1) often begins as a divinely implanted longing for Him.

 \* God Gives the Will to Believe and Obey: Once that desire is stirred, God also enables our will to respond in faith. The decision to trust in Jesus Christ, to turn from sin, to say "yes" to His call (Romans 1:6) – this isn't simply an independent human act, but a Spirit-empowered choice. It's the will to embrace the "obedience that comes from faith," a will that is now freed from the dominion of sin because we are "under grace."

 \* God Gives the Power to Live for Him: And as we continue in this journey of faith, it is God who provides the ongoing power to "apply what is good for him." Our obedience isn't a burdensome duty to earn favor; it's a joyful response enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Because we are "under grace" (Romans 6:14), sin no longer has dominion over us. God empowers us to live righteously, to love others, and to fulfill His purposes – all flowing from a heart transformed by His grace.

Conclusion

So, what does this mean for us today?

It means that the Christian life is not about trying harder to earn something we already have through grace. It's not about being crushed by the law, but liberated by grace.

It means:

 \* Your faith is not a work, but a gift. It’s the confident assurance God instills in you about His unseen realities and promises.

 \* Your obedience is not a burden, but a fruit. It flows naturally from a heart transformed by grace and empowered by the Spirit, reflecting your love for the God who saved you.

 \* Your very desire, will, and power to live for God come from Him. This should fill you with immense relief and profound gratitude! You don't have to generate it; He provides it.

When you feel weak, remember Philippians 2:13: "it is God who works in you." When you doubt, cling to Hebrews 11:1: "faith is confidence...and assurance." And when you stumble, return to Romans 6:14: "you are not under law but under grace."

Let us, then, live in the joyful freedom of God's grace, embracing the obedience that truly comes from faith, knowing that it is God Himself who empowers us, moment by moment, to live for His good pleasure and for His glorious name's sake.

Amen.