

Concerning Faith (part 1 of 2)

Hebrews 11:6 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Introduction

What is faith? Has anyone ever helped you to understand what Christian faith is all about? Not the faith in any god but the LORD God? Not the faith in any religion as the way to Heaven but the faith in Jesus as the only way to salvation? The faith that keeps us strong and secure all the time, and the faith we practice every day. How would you explain if someone asks you about faith? Once again, let me be very clear on what I am talking about. We're specifically talking about the Christian faith in the LORD God, the faith in Jesus the Son of God, the faith that makes us children of God in Christ and the faith that believes the Bible as God's Word.

God's Word in today's text says that without faith it is impossible to please God. So, our faith is essential in our relationship with God. Without faith, we cannot please God, no matter how hard we may try. However, with faith in Him, it is easy to please the Lord whom we worship and serve. So, what is faith?

Starting today, for the next two Sundays, I am going to share with you what I have learned from my teacher about faith when I was a baby Christian. I heard his explanation only once forty some years ago, but it was so clear and vivid that it permanently etched in my heart what Christian faith is all about. It forever changed and shaped my understanding and practice of faith thereafter. In one word, faith is trust.

Content

There are two sides of faith: one part that involves our mind. And the other part that involves our heart. To be more specific, 'intellectual understanding' part and 'actual trust' part.

A. Intellectual understanding

In order for us to understand who God is, what He likes and dislikes, what He approves and disapproves, what He can do and cannot do, what He has done, what He does, and what He will do and not do, we need our mind to work. In the end, we understand that the LORD God is the Creator, Sustainer, Owner, Revealer, and Rewarder.

Such intellectual understanding of God is important, yet with it alone, our faith can be ‘cut and dried’ lacking the experience of God who is alive in our lives. It’s like listening to a sermon with no illustrations. It’s like you know all about divine love yet never experience what His love is truly like. It’s like you are a Ph.D. on automobiles yet have never driven in the car. You can explain to me that, first, the car needs the engine. The engine needs gasoline. Without gasoline, it cannot run. Without the engine running, the wheels won’t turn. Without the wheels moving, the automobile won’t go even an inch. So on and so forth. However, when I ask you how it is like to drive in the car, you won’t be able to help me, because you never drove.

Our faith works in the same way. From the Bible, we can learn about how God created the universe and everything in it. We can confess that He is the One who sustains us daily. We can even teach Sunday School until our face is blue about all the attributes of God: loving, kind, good, everlasting, faithful, compassionate, jealous, and so forth. But such knowledge doesn’t mean much until we experience the same God in a personal level. Such intellectual understanding of God doesn’t mean anything, either, until we experience the same God who’s alive and deeply involved in our daily lives. You can be a Ph.D. in theology; however, until you experience God as the One who genuinely cares for you in your struggles, your intellectual understanding means nothing.

E.g. One night, Peter and the other disciples were sailing in a boat. That night, they saw Jesus walking on the waters. They thought he was a ghost. Superstition was among the fishermen in those days: to see a ghost in the middle of the sea meant imminent death. So, they all screamed out of fear. Then, Jesus told them not to be afraid, because, He said, *it is I your Lord, not a ghost*. Peter said, *if You are as You claim, command me to walk to You on the waters*. Jesus said, *come*. Peter started walking on the waters. It was one thing for him to believe what Jesus could do. He was seeing Him doing it. It was quite another for him to jump out of the boat onto the surface of the waters upon Jesus’ command. That’s trusting part. That leads us to the second part of our faith: trust.

B. Trusting in the Lord.

If your mind is required to understand God and His power, it is the heart that is required to trust in the Lord. This is the part where we need to throw ourselves all into what we believe so that we may experience God’s wonderful provision and power. This is the part that makes our faith real and exciting. E.g. A single mother in Brooklyn with several kids struggled to raise them alone. One evening, as it had happened before, she ran out of food. The good news was that she was a believer. She knew what God could do in her mind. Many a time, in the past, she also experienced the living God providing her needs. That night she went to the Lord in prayer as she had done before: *Lord, what would I do? Kids are hungry and we have nothing for dinner*. The Lord spoke to her saying, “Get the table ready.” She was familiar with the voice of the Holy Spirit. So, she asked the children to set

up the table. The Holy Spirit also asked her to start boiling the water. She obeyed. She started the fire with a pot full of water. No sooner than that, there was a knock at the door. The kids were excited and ran to the door to answer. As soon as they opened the door, they saw two strangers standing before them. The kids looked at their hands. The visitors were holding two bags in both hands (total of 4 grocery bags). The family asked what was going on. The visitors had no idea, either, why they were there except they had obeyed the voice of the Holy Spirit. They said, "We were praying this afternoon, and in the middle of prayer, we heard the Holy Spirit saying, 'Arise, and get some groceries, and go to 49 Maple Street, Apt. 206.' So, that's why we are here."

It is one thing to profess that God provides our needs according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). That's intellectual agreement part in our mind. But it is quite another to trust in the Lord in daily situations especially when you don't see anything tangible in front of you. That's trusting part in our heart.

Think of the mother of children one more time. She walked in her faith and trust, not by sight, didn't she? She trusted in the Lord and obeyed Him when she didn't see anything with her eyes. She trusted in the Lord and called the children to the dinner when there was nothing to put on the table. She trusted in the Lord and started the fire to cook when there was nothing to put in the pot. That's faith. That's trust. She trusted and obeyed the Lord and experienced the living God in her life.

Conclusion

As for closing, I am going to tell you one more story. A historical fact: a French acrobat, Emile Blondin, crossed the Niagara Falls on a tightrope in just 5 minutes (source: *the Life Magazine: Daily Calendar: June 30, 1859*).

First, Mr. Blondin crossed the Falls with a balance beam in his hands. Next, he pushed a wheelbarrow and finished the crossing successfully. The crowd cheered wildly, "You're the greatest acrobat in the world!" Finally, he challenged the crowd to jump in the wheelbarrow trusting him. No one volunteered, although everyone confessed that they believed in the acrobat. None committed to his invitation. Non-commitment is not trust. It is not true faith, either. Will you trust the Lord today? Will you commit your ways to Him today? Will you walk by faith not by sight today?

We will continue the part 2 next week. Amen.