

Foundational Doctrines: Faith

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I would like to continue our study of some of the basic doctrines of God's word.
 - A. In the last lesson we studied about how our salvation is by God's grace, or unmerited favor, because our sins make it impossible for us to earn our salvation by the works we do.
 - B. Yet, we concluded with how God's grace that saves must be accepted—that God does not force salvation by His grace upon anyone.
2. Today I would like to discuss the subject of faith and its part in God's plan of salvation.
 - A. This is important seeing that the bible is clear in stating that for salvation to be by grace, it must also be received by faith.
 - B. Romans 4:16 – “**Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace**, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.”
3. To examine biblical faith, I want us to look at:
 - A. Faith defined
 - B. Why is salvation by faith?
 - C. What is saving faith?

BODY:

I. Faith Defined [Pistis/Pistos/Pisteuo]:

- A. To be trustworthy, reliable:
 1. **BDAG** – that which causes trust or faith, faithfulness, reliability, trustworthy, dependable
 - a. It is used as a characteristic of God's people (2 Tim. 2:2 – “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to **faithful** men who will be able to teach others also.”).
 - b. As a requirement for those who serve God (Rev. 2:10 – “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be **faithful** until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”).
 2. It is used God being trustworthy and reliable, which inspires our trust or faith in Him (Heb. 10:23 – “Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is faithful*.”).
- B. To have strong conviction or trust, particularly in God
 1. **Vine's** (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God's revelation or truth (2) a personal surrender to Him; (3) a conduct inspired by such surrender” (p. 222).
 2. **Thayer's** – used especially of the faith by which a man embraces Jesus, i.e., a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah—the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience to Christ” (p. 511).
 3. The Bible present this faith as a requirement for salvation:
 - a. Heb. 11:6 – “And 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.”
 - b. Jn. 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”
 4. That faith that saves includes a firm conviction concerning Jesus being Christ, trust in His word, personal surrender to Jesus, and conduct inspired by that surrender, or obedience, is denied by so many today.
 - a. They want faith to be a mental acceptance, or what they call faith alone.
 - b. But that this is not saving faith is seen in the Bible's description of faith that did not please God or lead to salvation (Jn. 12:42-43 – “Nevertheless many even of the rulers **believed** in Him, but because of the Pharisees they **were not confessing Him**, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for **they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God**.”).

- i. The rulers believed, or mentally acknowledged, Jesus to be the Christ.
 - ii. But, their conviction or trust in Christ *was not strong enough to save them* because it did not result in action, in their willingness to confess Him (Rom. 10:9-10 – “that **if you confess with your mouth** Jesus as Lord, **and believe** in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, **you will be saved**; ¹⁰ for with the **heart** a person **believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the **mouth** he **confesses**, resulting in **salvation**.”).
5. So, biblical faith, or faith that saves, includes more than just a mental acknowledgement or acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.

II. Why is salvation by faith?

- A. Faith is a part of who we are designed to be. Everybody puts faith in something or someone.
1. We put faith in:
 - a. Family, seeing from birth being in a family requires that we trust our parents.
 - b. Our cars, the rules of the road, and other drivers.
 - i. We trust that cars are designed to function safely, are properly put together, and will get us where we are wanting to go.
 - ii. We trust ourselves and others to make the right driving decisions to assure our safety.
 - iii. We act upon that trust by getting in our cars and driving around, often at high speeds.
 - c. Our stores:
 - i. We believe that the food they stock, and those who produce and package it, have done so properly and that it is not dangerously contaminated.
 - ii. We believe that they store our food properly.
 - iii. We act upon this trust by buying and eating this food.
 - d. Our home’s construction, plumbing, wiring, etc., that it will not fail and seriously damage our home, our possessions, or more importantly *ourselves*.
 - e. This list could go on and on!
 2. We generally *trust* these things with little or no thought. We just accept our life as being a life of faith, that faith is part of life. And it is.
 3. So, God’s call for us to trust in something or someone other than ourselves, which in this case is Jesus Christ His Son, is not extraordinary in and of itself. Life is about faith/trust!
- B. God calls us to have *faith* or *trust* in *another* to be saved because faith in ourselves is *futile*.
1. Salvation by faith is like travelling to Australia.
 - a. If you want to go there, you are going to have to trust in someone or something other than yourself to get there. For, you cannot walk, fly, or swim there by your own abilities.
 - b. You will have to trust a pilot, a plane, ship, car, etc., if you hope to get there, which also involves a very long list of other people, situation, etc., that you must trust in addition.
 2. To trust in our ability to do what is needed to save ourselves is far more foolhardy than trusting that we can get to Australia by our abilities alone.
 - a. Why? We have all failed to do what is required to save ourselves.
 - b. We are sinners (Rom. 3:9, 23 – “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks **are all under sin**...²³ for **all have sinned** and **fall short of the glory of God**.”).
 - c. As sinners we cannot save ourselves, but have come to deserve condemnation (Rom. 6:23 – “For the **wages of sin is death**, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”).
 3. We cannot put our faith in ourselves to be saved seeing our actions condemn us!
- C. God has made *faith in another* leading to *salvation* is a reality!
1. That sinners who have *earned eternal condemnation* can trust in what someone else has done and be saved as a result of that trust is nothing short of amazing.
 2. For, what this means is that the most holy God, our Creator whom we have rebelled against, has chosen to show us unwarranted favor by providing a **Messiah**, a **Savior**, for us.

- a. Consider the character of God needed to make this happen (Titus 3:3-7 – “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴ But when the **kindness** of God our Savior and His **love** for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, **not on the basis of deeds which we have done** in righteousness [**because we are ultimately sinners – rp**], but according to His **mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that **being justified by His grace** we would be **made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**”).
 - b. So, God showed us kindness and love despite how we are unkind and unlovable.
 - c. God acted by mercy in that He has not given us what we deserve—condemnation.
 - d. God acted by grace in that He has chosen instead to give what we do not deserve—to give us salvation and eternal life with Him in Heaven.
3. Because our actions show us to be sinners, it is by faith that God justifies sinner (Rom. 5:1-2 – “Therefore, having been **justified by faith**, we have **peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith **into this grace** in which we stand; and we exult in **hope of the glory of God.**”).
 - a. By trust in Jesus, we receive justification (pronounced righteous), peace with God, a life lived in God’s grace, and hope of glory! Can you believe God has done this?!
 - b. So by Jesus’ redemptive work of dying on the cross and being resurrected to life God has made it possible for Him to justly, or rightly, **forgive us of our sins** (Rom. 3:26).
 - i. Eph. 1:3, 7 – “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,... ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His **blood**, the **forgiveness of our trespasses**, according to the riches of His **grace**”
 - ii. Col. 1:13-14 – “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”
 - c. By faith in Christ and what He has done the very sins we have committed against God are forgiven by God Himself, taken away and no longer held against us!
 - d. We need to think about that far more than we do, allowing the reality of God’s love, kindness, mercy, and grace resulting in justification by forgiveness to change our lives.
- D. The need for faith in God to be saved because we are sinner is proven in the example of Abraham (Rom. 4:1-8):
 1. Abraham’s justification, or him being pronounced righteous by God, was not according to his works in the flesh, but based upon his faith/belief in God (4:1-3).
 2. The one who works is given what is due, or earned, while the one who trusts in God who justifies the ungodly (i.e., sinners condemned) is accounted as righteous (4:4-5).
 3. How so? Because those who trust God, seeing they know they are ungodly and cannot earn salvation, are forgiven of their sins (4:6-8).
 - a. Sinners, the ungodly, must be justified apart from works, seeing that their works have proven them to be sinner deserving of condemnation.
 - b. Thus, the individual who has faith in God is blessed because *their lawless deeds are forgiven.*
 - c. So, Abraham’s faith brought about his justification because based on it God forgave his sins.
 4. The same is true for all who have sinned today, or any and everyone!

III. What is saving faith?

- A. The Bible clearly teaches that saving faith is **trust + action/obedience**.
 1. Though so few who claim to follow Christ accept this today, we know this to be the true definition of faith even from our daily living.

- a. You can say you trust someone or something, but until you prove it by being willing to act upon that trust, it is all words.
 - b. You could say you trust a doctor; but until you are willing to act on that trust by going to that doctor and doing what that doctor tells you to do, it means nothing.
 - c. You could say you trust my driving. But until you are willing to get in the car with me, it is all words of no substance. Your actions prove your words to be false.
2. Faith must be manifested in action before it saves, before it is of any use at all (Jas. 2:14-17 – “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”).
- a. This text is dealing with the kind of faith that *does not save*, that is *useless* when it comes to saving someone.
 - b. The faith that does not save is clearly described as a *faith without works/action* (2:14).
 - c. The Holy Spirit equates the *uselessness* of a faith without works with that of telling someone to “be warmed and be filled” without giving them what they need.
 - d. **The conclusion:** “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself” (2:17).
- B. For faith to justify us, it must be perfected, or **made complete**, by **combining it with action**, or works (Jas. 2:20-24 – “But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.”).
1. The question is whether one is willing to accept that *faith without works is useless* (2:20).
 - a. Many who claim to follow Jesus are not willing to accept that truth!
 - b. Calvinism has influenced the thinking of so many that any mention of *works*, or actions, in connection with faith is rejected without thought or discussion.
 2. Yet, the Holy Spirit says Abraham was *justified by works* when he offered Isaac on the altar!
 - a. For, his *faith was working with his works* which resulted in his *faith becoming complete*.
 - i. To seek salvation by faith alone, faith that has done nothing to prove itself, is to seek salvation by an incomplete faith.
 - ii. Saving faith becomes just that by combining with our actions, our obedience to God.
 - b. Abraham’s ***faith + works*** that fulfilled the passage that says *Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness* (2:22-23).
 - i. Thus, what the Bible means by believing God is *faith and works together*.
 - ii. You cannot claim to believe God, to have saving faith in God, until that faith acts on what God has commanded of you.
 - c. The Hebrew writer confirms these conclusions (Heb. 11:17-19 – “**By faith** Abraham, when he was **tested, offered up Isaac**, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, of whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR SEED SHALL BE CALLED,” **concluding that God was able to raise him up**, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.”).
 - i. Abraham trusted God enough to **act**, to **offer Isaac**, the child of promise, because he believed God’s promise concerning Isaac and that God could and would raise him up to fulfill that promise.
 - ii. Understand, it was not until Abraham offered Isaac that he passed God’s test and that God acknowledged that Abraham feared Him (Gen. 22:10-12 – Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ¹² He

said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; **for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.**”).

- d. By Abraham’s example of offering Isaac, we should accept the Holy Spirit’s words:
 - i. “A man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (2:24).
 - ii. “Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead” (2:26).
 - iii. Therefore, you cannot be justified, or pronounced righteous through forgiveness of your sins, by faith alone, seeing faith without works is a dead faith!
- C. That faith only saves after it has been completed in obedient action is seen in the toppling of the walls of Jericho (Heb. 11:30 – “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down **after they had been encircled for seven days.**”).
 1. Note that the walls fell down by faith, but only **after** that faith manifested itself to be strong enough for Israel to act in obedience to God’s plan and march around the city.
 2. This example is so important because Jericho, like our salvation, was a gift of God, something provided by His grace (Josh. 6:1-2 – “Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. ² The Lord said to Joshua, “See, **I have given Jericho into your hand**, with its king and the valiant warriors.”).
 - a. To receive this gift Israel had to trust God enough to meet His conditions by obeying His instruction to march around the city in a particular fashion for seven days (6:3-5).
 - b. Only after Israel faith led them to do all that God said did God cause the walls to fall down allowing Israel to go up and take possession of this gift (cite 6:11-20).
 3. In the same way, faith that save sinners is faith that is proven by obedience.

CONCLUSION:

1. So, will you truly trust in God so as to have access into the grace of God given in Jesus Christ?
2. If so, you must acknowledge your sin, confess your belief in Jesus as the Messiah and Lord, repent of your sins, and trust God’s working enough to be baptized into Christ in order for Him to save you!
3. Will you be saved by God’s grace through faith by responding in obedient faith to the gospel today?