

Session 12: Without faith it is impossible to please God.

Why?

We must understand what true faith is and is not!

FAITH...The definition of FAITH according to Webster is “an unquestionable belief in God, religion, etc.; loyalty and allegiance in a person or thing; a religion or system of religious beliefs.”¹ According to the Word of God, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1); and, it is “*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*” (Hebrews 11:3). Although Webster’s definition fits into the worldview of what man would consider faith, it is too ambiguous and far-reaching to understand the Christian meaning of faith due to the inconsistency of what is said. There is only one God. Although Webster sounds like he is referring to one God, we cannot be for certain that he is referring to the One and Only God. Faith is belief in the Christian God. This is the foundation for all of our reasoning as a Christian. Otherwise, a person has no foundation...just an opening in his mind for logic and reason. And that logic and reason is enmity against God. Human reasoning or presupposing your own authority is enmity against God; which is a sin against God.

The believer (the born-again Christian that knows Jesus Christ as his personal Savior) is directed to avoid philosophy which has its roots in worldly, humanistic, and non-Christian presuppositions (*Colossians 2:8, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”*) It is imperative that the Christian who prefers to know the truth and desires the truth to set him free understands that God’s word demands unreserved allegiance to God and His truth in all our thought(s) and scholarly endeavors. Therefore, he must make every academic pursuit and every thought related to Jesus Christ. To not use the principles of Christ in our thoughts at any point is to deny the wisdom and knowledge of truth God has placed in us when we accepted Him as our Savior and Lord. Does this mean that those that fail to place Christ Jesus as the pivotal point of all relationships and all activities are non-believers or non-Christian? No...but it does mean that the Christian that places reason or fact before faith is inviting the enemy into his thoughts, presuppositions and actions and will eventually lead to false religion or false and uncharacteristic actions of faith.

¹ Webster’s New World Dictionary of American Language, College Edition, page 522.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE HEROES OF FAITH?

Hebrews 11:1-40, “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.”^[c] 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, ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ 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— ³⁸ 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, ⁴⁰ since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

Why did the writer of Hebrews mention the Old Testament heroes in lieu of what was going on then...the present?

Let's look at some of the Heroes of FAITH!

Abel..Righteous man.

Enoch...

Pleased God. Believed that God is a rewarder of those who spend their lives seeking Him.

Noah...had holy fear; heir of righteousness

Abraham...

Obedient servant who offered his best; looked forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Sarah...

Received strength and power to conceive; delivered a child in her old age...

Judged God faithful to His promise.

Isaac...blessed his sons in regard to their future (should we not do the same?)

Jacob...blessed his sons and worshipped even in his old age

Joseph...gave a history lesson on God's protective hand for His people

Moses...

Chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He looked ahead to his heavenly reward in lieu of the treasures of man.

He saw the invisible over what was visible.

Israelites...obeyed

Passed through the Red Sea

Marched around walls of Jericho

Rahab...

Welcomed the spies and obeyed their orders; was bold enough to convince her family that there is a God

Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets...

Conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised!

These men were successful in their endeavors...even though there were, by man's standards, impossible odds against them.

All of these received special anointing and special honors because of their faith.

Their faith was so strong...Many received special attributes:

Weakness turned to strength;

Became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies

Women received back their dead, raised to life again.

All of the Old Testament Heroes of Faith were looking forward to God's plan for a future home...and that all of us (including them) who trust God will be made perfect in the resurrection.

Many of the Heroes of Faith followed this three-fold course in learning to trust God:

1. Began with sheer doubt/skepticism

a. Abraham fell upon his face and laughed when God told him he was going to father a nation (Genesis 17:17)

b. Sarah laughed to herself (Genesis 18:12)

Note: On first hearing of the promises of God, the human reaction is often that this is far too good to be true. For instance, our salvation; our healing.

2. Passed on to dawning realization

If God is the One that said it, could it be that really....nothing is impossible with God!

3. Culminating in the ability to believe the impossible.

People spend the greater part of their lives putting limitations on the power of God.

Faith is the ability to take hold of that grace which is sufficient for all things in such a way that the things which are humanly impossible become divinely possible.

We must do the same if we plan on being part of the blessings that God has in store for us.

Why wait until we get to the "promised land" to receive His promises?

All of the Heroes of the Faith were commended for their faith...yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that together with us would be made perfect.

What was the promise in which they were waiting?

The Messiah...who will fulfill all Scripture. Promised and fulfilled...Jesus said it.

Did the apostles please God?

There isn't one apostle included in the Heroes of Faith...Why?

Remember Jesus' words to Thomas in John 20:29, "Then Jesus told him (Thomas), 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' "

The apostles will be rewarded...but, not for faith alone. Their repertoire and credentials were engrained with belief because they knew Jesus was real, was fulfilling and would continue to fulfill His promises.

They were witnesses of His resurrection and His departure into heaven...back to the Father. They were willing to give up their lives because they witnessed TRUTH.

What one attribute is more important than faith? LOVE

Why?

Love is the fulfillment of the law! Romans 13:10, "Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

YOU HAVE TO LOVE BEFORE YOUR FAITH CAN BE GENUINELY EXPRESSED AND DEEMED PLEASING TO GOD.

The one promise in which all of us can possess (Revelation 21:1-7)....by faith!
Revelation 21:1-7, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." ⁵He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

***Inherited because it was made possible by God Himself...
Our responsibility...Believe!***