

Sat Nav'd For Service

"The future belongs to a people prepared"

Introduction – "What is Faith?"

I decided to approach this first topic of the day by looking at what the New Testament says about Faith. But before we look at some Scriptures on Faith I just want to mention things that we are not talking about today –

- ❑ **The Faith** – this is the whole body of Christian truth; the total revelation of God to man. (See the following scriptures – 2 Timothy 4:7; Jude 3; Ephesians 4:5.)
- ❑ **Faithfulness** – this is the quality of trustworthiness and steadfastness. God is faithful and trustworthy and we become like Him. (See the following scriptures – Colossians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:12.)
- ❑ **The Gift of Faith** – this is a specific gift of the Holy Spirit. The reason we are not looking at this is because not all will have this gift. The Holy Spirit gives the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 to individuals, as He decides and directs. We are all to have faith but we will not all have the specific gift of faith as in 1 Corinthians 12:9. (see 1 Corinthians 12:28 – 30 for the scriptural principal that Paul highlights in regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit e.g. while he encourages all to speak in tongues, he teaches that not all will have the specific gift of tongues.)

God has given to every Christian "a measure of faith" (Rom 12:3). The gift of faith in 1 Corinthians 12 is, in the words of Selwyn Hughes, "a divine gift, given only to certain people or on certain occasions, in order to accomplish supernatural exploits." (see Acts 27:22 as an example). We are focusing on your individual faith to live out - Mark 16:15-18; Ephesians 2:10; John 15:1-8; 2 Peter 1:2-4; 2 Timothy 1:7- in your local church, in your employment, in your family and in your local community. While not undervaluing the specific gift of 1 Corinthians 12, remember the strength and depth of your individual faith will determine what you will ask and seek for, from the Holy Spirit. You know the saying – lets not put the cart before the horse. Before seeking any of the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12, we must look at our own individual faith.

Jim Cymbala – "What do you think it would take to amaze Jesus? ...Never in any chapter of the four Gospels was Jesus astounded by anyone's righteousness.... Never was he impressed with anyone's wisdom or education... But he was amazed by one thing: people's faith."

In this session we are talking about the faith to believe, to do, to live, to go, to walk, to battle, to defeat, to conquer, to defend, to worship, to praise, to relate, to pray, to give, to serve, to obey, to stand. The faith which will have Jesus saying – "WOW."

Hebrews 11:6 – "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 diligently seek Him." Let us not accept any substitute or any alternative to FAITH. Nothing else counts if faith is missing. There is no other foundation for Christian living.

Ronald Dunn – "Faith is the identifying mark of the Christian. In early Christianity it was the primary word used to describe our relationship to God; we were called "believers" before we were called Christians."

Survey of "Faith" in The New Testament?

By using a good Bible Concordance, I found the following Scriptures (all references are NKJ, unless stated) –

- 1) **Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."** - This verse is very important verse in understanding something about Biblical faith. Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary on Hebrews, makes this comment about the above verse – *"This is not a definition of faith but a description of what faith does and how it works."* This verse is a statement of faith's power and activity. This is what faith does.
 - **"Now faith is.."** – faith is always a present reality because God is an ever-present God (see Exodus 3:14). Faith is a now quality. It is something that I have now because God, the source of faith, is always in the present.
 - **"..the substance of things hoped for.."** – faith is not a stab in the dark but "is being sure of what we hope for" (NIV). The word "substance" means "to stand under, to support." Faith for a Christian is what a foundation is to house: faith gives confidence and assurance. So we can say that faith is the confidence of things hoped for – all the blessings and benefits of being a son of God. When a Christian has faith, it is God's way of giving confidence and assurance that what God has promised is mine. A further meaning for the word "substance" is that of a title deed. It is the word that was used to declare ownership of a property. From a spiritual viewpoint we can say that by God giving us faith, He is giving us the title deeds to everything spiritual. Faith enables me to possess my possessions.
 - **"..the evidence of things not seen"** – faith is not "pie in the sky" but is the evidence of all spiritual things. Evidence is what you use to support the existence of something. Evidence is used to prove something exists. Your birth certificate is the evidence of where you were born, when you were born and who you parents were. Faith is the evidence that the world of God, unseen to the naked eye, is real and true. But there is something else to add regarding the word "evidence." It means "proof by demonstration." Faith convinces us of spiritual things but also brings them into the actual experience of our lives. Just remember what you have experienced in times of worship either on your own or with a group of Christians – it has been like heaven on earth.

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Jim Cymbala writes "What is faith? It is total dependence upon God that becomes supernatural in its working. People with faith develop a second kind of sight. They see more than just the circumstances; they see God, right beside them. Can they prove it? No. But by faith they know he's there nonetheless."

Selwyn Hughes writes "Faith...reaches out to the unseen, focuses upon it, grasps its reality and then acts upon it in the confidence that what God has said will inevitably come to pass."

- 2) **Mark 11:22 "Have faith in God."** – it is not a matter of "just having faith" or "only believe". Faith must have an object – someone or something. The Bible tells us to have God as our focus. Jesus didn't tell His disciples to "faith in faith", but to "have faith in God." A warning – just be careful about some of the formulas and processes that are taught about faith today. (see "Christianity in Crisis" for more information).

Judson Cornwall writes "When we shift our faith from God to anything else, we tend to think and exercise faith for, rather than faith in. Faith for makes us things-orientated, rather than God orientated."

Selwyn Hughes, in agreeing with the above statement, adds this comment in regard to faith in things – "We become more concerned about using God than letting Him use us."

- 3) **Romans 10:17 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** – we are not talking about natural faith: faith that we have within ourselves. Paul tells us that "**faith comes**" from a source outside ourselves. We cannot generate faith ourselves or work it up. Biblical faith is imparted to us from God through His Word. Faith is not convincing ourselves that something is true. It is not psyching ourselves up with the latest song from Vineyard or some sort of self-hypnosis. Faith is received and imparted by God. Thank God, he has a great deal to impart to us!

Ronald Dunn writes "...faith is a leap into the light, the light of God's Word. Without this light we cannot exercise faith in God."

Throughout the New Testament two different words are used for "the word of God." The words are LOGOS and RHEMA.

- ❑ **LOGOS** – this is the most frequent of the words used and speaks of the total revelation of God, all that God has spoken to man, the gospel message. For instance, Jesus is called the Word (logos) of God in John 1:1 because He is the full and complete revelation of God to man. For us today, LOGOS is the Bible.
- ❑ **RHEMA** – the idea with this word is of something spoken; someone is speaking, someone is speaking forth something. For us today, RHEMA is something spoken from the Bible. The word for "word" in Romans 10:17 is RHEMA. The idea is not that we are hearing preaching about Jesus, but hearing Jesus speak to you and I personally through the message that is being preached. The hearing of Romans 10:17 is not the preachers voice but Jesus speaking through the message of the preacher. Please remember – RHEMA utterances can come during your own devotional time and through the inner voice of the Holy Spirit. I have a plea to make – make the hearing of Jesus a priority in your life.

Another example of RHEMA is the phrase "the sword of the Spirit, which is the RHEMA of God" from Ephesians 6:17. W.E.Vine writes - "...the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual Scripture which the Holy Spirit brings to our remembrance for us in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture."

As a Pentecostal Fellowship, we believe in the voice of gifts of the Holy Spirit and in the gift of the Prophet. These would be further areas for a RHEMA word to come but we would not accept any word that is contrary to the Bible. We would also not accept an extra Biblical word. RHEMA words can also come through dreams, visions etc. GOD WANTS US TO KNOW RHEMA WORDS – HE HAS PLENTY OF WAYS AVAILABLE TO SPEAK A RHEMA.

Warren Wiersbe writes, "This faith operates quite simply. God speaks and we hear His Word. We trust His Word and act on it no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be."

- 4) **Romans 1:17 "The just shall live by faith."** - we know that we are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8), but this verse tells us that we are to "**live by faith**." (see also 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Galatians 2:20). Four times in the Bible God tells us "The just shall live by faith." That tells me – this is pretty important for us to get hold of.

Ronald Dunn – "Salvation commences with faith and continues the same way; we live the way we entered it."

- 5) **Matthew 9:29 "According to your faith let it be to you."** – Jesus said this to two blind men. As a result of reading this incident in the ministry of Jesus, I forced myself to ask this question – are my failures, failures of faith? Can I take these words of Jesus and apply them to my life?

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Vance Havner – "Faith in God will not get for you everything you may want, but it will get for you what God wants you to have."

6) **"according to your faith and trust and reliance (on the power invested in Me) be it done to you." (Amp Bible)**

Are my failures (and let us be honest, we do fail) and your failures IN -?

- overcoming temptations (1 John 5:4)
- resisting the devil (1 Peter 5:9)
- defeating thoughts planted in our minds (Ephesians 5:16)
- intercessory and petitionary prayer (Matthew 21:22)(James 5:15)
- seeing the impossible (Mark 9:23)
- removing obstacles in our path (Mark 11:23)
- receiving from God for our needs (James 1:5-8)
- knowing an ongoing experience of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:2-3)

ARE THEY ALL DOWN TO A LACK OF FAITH? I think the answer is Yes.

Samuel Chadwick said "Without faith man can do nothing with God, and God can do nothing with man."

7) **John 6:29 "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."** – I have found this scripture to be encouraging because it tells me that God works in my life and your life, so that we have faith in Jesus. Let me add a further thought – God started this work of faith in us and he continues the work – it is a work in progress. The question is – what does He require from you and I that this work is not frustrated?

8) **1 John 5:4 "And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith"** Our individual faith is one of the spiritual weapons that Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 10:4.

9) **James 2:14-22 ".....faith without works is dead."** – without going into these scriptures in any depth, we learn that faith in God has a serving dimension to it. God will ask me to do things (see Ephesians 2:10) for Him that can only be done with faith in Him. The question that we must ask is this – What has God revealed to you about your service both in your local church and in your community?

Ronald Dunn writes, "True faith is active. Read again the account of the faith of the Old Testament saints in Hebrews 11. The writer describes their faith by talking about their works. They did something. Believing God does not mean lounging lazily about with our arms folded and "letting God do it." Faith is acting on the revealed will of God."

10) **2 Peter 1:5 " ...add to your faith virtue."** – we cannot ignore this important truth that is also highlighted in 1 Corinthians 13. The developing our characters (the Biblical word is sanctification) cannot be ignored as we seek to grow in faith.

11) **Hebrews 11:6 "...God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."** – in the New Testament we have verses, which speak of little faith (Matthew 6:5), great faith (Luke 7:9), increasing faith (Luke 17:5), no faith (Mark 4:40) and faith the size of a mustard seed (Luke 17:6).

Selwyn Hughes writes "Many Christians never get far in the development of their faith because they see it as something fixed and final and thus they have no expectation of growth. They point to the text: "God has dealt to each one a measure of faith and infer from this that our calling is to go through life functioning within our appointed and pre-ordained circle. But take a look at2 Thessalonians 1:3 "because your faith is growing more and more" (Phillips translation says "your faith has made such strides"). I consider the belief that "we are given a fixed measure of faith and cannot expect it to increase" to be one of the most injurious of all the errors in the Christian Church today."

We have looked at many scriptures in regard to Faith in the New Testament. When we think of Hebrews 11 we can go further and say that it is a very important teaching in the whole Bible. Let me quote a scripture we mentioned right at the beginning -

Hebrews 11:6 – "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 diligently seek Him."

Please take note of the word "IMPOSSIBLE". It means what it says – "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Don't try to think of alternatives to faith but say within your heart – **LORD, I WANT TO GIVE MYSELF TO YOU MORE AND MORE SO I BECOME A PERSON WHO IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE A FAITH LIVING AND FAITH SERVING CHRISTIAN. I WANT TO BE LIKE STEPHEN – "A MAN FULL OF FAITH AND THE HOLY SPIRIT."** (Acts 6:5)

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What can we now say about Faith?

Selwyn Hughes, in his book "8 Ways to Deepen Your Faith", answers the question - WHAT FAITH IS NOT?

- Faith is not mere intellectual acceptance
- Faith is not blind credulity (something the ridiculous and unreasonable)
- Faith is not naïve optimism
- Faith is not trying hard to believe
- Faith is not positive thinking
- Faith is not presumption

WHAT IS FAITH?

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." – we looked at this verse earlier. What is Faith?

Faith is a GIFT – We do not work up Faith; God gives it. We have already been given a measure of faith. The question is – are we putting it to use now? When God asks you to do something, which you don't feel like doing – how do you respond? God will not give you more faith if you are not using what he has already given you. This truth of faith being a gift challenges what our attitudes are toward God and His Will for our lives. Are we prepared to hear? Do we have a willingness to listen? Do we have a readiness to obey? God will not give you more faith if there is unwillingness on your part to hear, listen and obey.

Jim Cymbala writes, "The greatest Christian is not the one who has achieved the most but rather the one who has received the most."

Ronald Dunn writes "Our faith does not depend upon our ability to believe, but upon His ability to impart it to us."

I like to see **Faith as a PLANT** – We know the parable of God's Word being like seed in our lives. I have already mentioned that faith can grow in our lives. We receive "a measure" but, from 2 Thessalonians 1:3, we understand that faith can grow in our lives. From this picture of faith being like a plant, we can draw out some challenges for our lives.

- What am I feeding my life with?
- Where am I positioning myself in God's Kingdom?
- What am I surrounding my life with?
- What spiritual disciplines are priorities in my life?
- What areas of service am I involving myself in?

Just think about FAITH AS A PLANT and draw the lessons from that picture for yourself

One final thing - Ronald Dunn in his book "Don't just sit there..Have Faith!" mentions three kinds of faith.

They are as follows (I am calling them levels of faith) –

- The first level of faith says, "God can."** We believe that nothing is too hard for God. We believe that God can do anything. Ronald Dunn writes – "...this is not the victorious faith of which the Bible speaks. It is passive and accomplishes nothing." Simply believing God can do anything doesn't mean your particular need will be met. You and I are just thinking God can meet my problem.
- The second level of faith says, "God will."** Ronald Dunn writes – " You believe not only that God can solve your problem but that He will – someday. In the meantime you bite your nails.....and drive everyone within fifty miles crazy."
- There is another level of faith** – Ronald Dunn writes, "The faith described in Hebrews 11:1 believes beyond God can and God will. It believes God has. This kind of faith declares it already done. Instead of waiting for God to create the provision, it steps into the provision already available. Isn't this what Jesus means in Mark 11:24.....Jesus literally is saying, "Believe you have already got it and you'll get it." That is just another way of saying, "Faith is substance."

What level are you at in your individual walk and service for God? We are not walking by sight but by faith. Biblical faith is believing you have something before you have it. You believe you have it because God says you have it.

Resources Used For This Study On Faith

Beside the Bible and a good Concordance see the following -

"God's Words – Key Bible Themes You Need To Know" – J.I.Packer; "Fresh Faith" – Jim Cymbala with Dean Merrill; "Don't Just Sit There – Have Faith!" – Ronald Dunn; "According to Your Faith" – School of The Word; "Christianity in Crisis" – Hank Hanegraaff; "Hanford's Bible Handbook" – Jack W.Hayford; "8 Ways to Deepen Your Faith" – Selwyn Hughes; "Be Confident" – Warren Wiersbe