

Faith – Part 1

We entered the kingdom of God through the doorway of salvation. And that's what we've looked at for the last few sessions. We've explored what salvation really is, and then we began to explore working it out. And everything that's spoken of from this point on, after your salvation, is working out your salvation. It's presented in one form or another.

So today, we are going to initiate discussion on faith. So salvation is the front door, but faith is the fuel. And that's what we will rely on from this point on to work out our salvation. But rather than just giving a couple of platitudes about faith, we're going to explore it in what I think is some degree of depth. Now today, of course, we're going to use the same format. Faith. What is it? Because if we can't agree on what it is, then we can't very well meaningfully communicate in a discussion about it. Thankfully, this is one of those times where our God Who is not a God of confusion made it easy by defining it.

Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen—the absolute certainty of things which are not seen at least by natural eyes. Now that's true for both natural faith and spiritual faith and I'm going to distinguish the two. And I gave you the second handout to use as an outline. I don't frequently do that, but today we're going to and for the next few sessions, we'll go through enough that I thought it might be beneficial to you to have an outline. So we looked at what it is by the Biblical definition. Now let's begin to explore it and we'll do that first of all by looking at natural faith.

Now natural faith is in the mind, not in the spirit. It's not in the immaterial part of man called the spirit. This is what's derived through our five senses and our experience here in the physical realm. And it's put into action by projecting confidence in the future in the natural realm based on experience in the natural realm.

Let's start with a familiar object. Something that's familiar in which you're exercising faith in the natural realm is based directly on past experience, personal experience. So I sit in a chair at home. Well, I've sat in that chair many times and it's always supported me. Now I hope that it holds me up the next time that I sit in it. I operate in a certain degree of assurance that it will because I've seen no evidence presented that it's deteriorating. I'm persuaded that it will and that's why I sit in that chair without testament. I'm operating in total faith and in regard to a future event with optimistic expectation that that chair is going to hold me up. But it has nothing to do with God; it has faith only in your past experiential self in the physical realm. So you sit in the chair. I throw an old baseball up in the air. I've thrown it up thousands of times and it's always come down. So I am fully persuaded that it will come down. I operate in the certainty of that which is not seen. I haven't seen it come down the next time, but I am operating in full confidence that it will. So I have faith in that baseball; I have faith in my experience with the law of gravity, so I throw it in the air in full of faith that it will come back down.

Now that carries over given our familiar experience even into the non-familiar. So non-familiar is not directly based on personal experience, but it's based on confidence projected on to the unexperience based on past experience with similar items or situations. So I sat in a chair in a hotel. Well, I've never sat on that chair before, never even been at this hotel before, so I hope that that chair holds me up and I'm operating with a certain degree of confidence based on other chairs that I've sat in and other hotels that I have stayed in and the level at which they function. So based on past experience with other chairs and other hotels, I operate in the conviction that this chair will hold me up. So I don't really test it. I'm projecting confidence on to something which has not occurred based on past experience with other things. So I have assurance that what I hope for will occur. So I have faith in chairs based on experience; I have faith in hotels based on experience. I have faith in men who run hotels and build chairs based on experience. So I sit in the chair in full faith that it will hold me up, though I have never seen that chair in my life. Same way with a new ball that you've never had; you throw it up, you expect it to come back down. That's why when you buy a new baseball, you take a glove because when you throw it up, you think it's going to come back down so you're prepared to catch it. But all of that is faith in the natural realm based on our natural selves. That's not what the Bible is talking about when it's talking about faith.

So what is the Bible talking about? Well, that brings us to spiritual faith. Romans 10:10 – For with the heart, man believes. The heart here, I think, refers to what I call the spirit; that is the deepest level, whatever terminology you use, the deepest level of the immaterial part of man. Now recall from that last teaching on salvation, that based on the Bible, we Christians believe that man has an immaterial component that is his true identity—what I call spirit. And that spirit dwells in a physical body. So we live in physical bodies, but we are not physical bodies in our identity.

So faith in the spirit realm is received in our spirits, in our immaterial self, not in our material self. If it's received in our spirits, our immaterial self, then where does it come from? Well, from spirit sources. And those spirit sources can be God or ungod. Ungodly spirits, that is to say non-God spirits, can refer to Satan and to his fallen angels; what we commonly speak of as demons. So if unsaved, we are said to be spiritually dead. Remember, that of course, does not mean cessation of existence or cessation of function; it means not able to perform the function for which it was created. So if dead in the spirit we are separated from God, we're not alive to God in His truths. So in that unsaved situation, our spiritual reception of faith unto our spirits, if it comes at all, comes from ungodly sources. Since Satan is opposed to God, then we receive faith in that unsaved situation in anything other than God. So we may hear the Word of God with our ears, but we have no faith in that Word of God. And that reminds us of course that faith and knowledge are two dramatically different things. A person can memorize the Bible, have a photographic memory, stand up here and read it verse by verse and have absolutely no faith that any word of it is truth.

Ah, but if saved, now it's a different situation. Then we're born of God; indwelled by God Himself, and the person of the Holy Spirit. We're now spiritually alive to God, in communion with God. Revelations of God are passed by the Holy Spirit into our spirits

by process of the confirmation of the Word of God. The Word of God is heard, the Spirit speaks to our spirit that this is true and it all comes together in what is called faith. Truth, remember, is how God views reality. Jesus is the truth. Jesus is God; and thus, being God and coming to show us God, showed us how God views reality. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth; that's why He bears witness of Jesus. Because Jesus being the truth, what else can the Holy Spirit bear witness of except that which is truth which is Jesus, the Son of God. In fact, the Spirit confirms to our spirit what the Word of God says since it's Spirit written about the Son of God Who is truth.

How do we pass from spirit death to spirit life? By being what we call: Born Again. John 3:3 – Jesus answered and said to him, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. So when we are born again, born of the Spirit of God, that is spirit—that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. That's why I use that terminology for the saved Christian. Because I am born of the Spirit of God; so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. So my identity, my inner self at its deepest level is now spirit, created in holiness and truth and righteousness in the likeness of God. So when we have become that new creation, we pass from having a spirit dead to God, to a spirit alive to God and that's when we're said to be quickened, regenerated, born again, and so on. We've covered all that. I'm giving you this review to integrate it with the concept called faith.

Well, how do we get saved? We all know Ephesians 2:8 – For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God. Now, all of these subjects we'll explore in greater detail as we go forward through the kingdom. But for right now, we know there is common grace; it rains on the just and unjust. We know there's grace by faith for salvation; we're sitting having experienced that. We felt that wind blow; we know from whence it came. So how do we access further grace? James 4:6 – God gives His grace to the humble. So there are three categories of grace for us to think in terms of. That which is common, comes to all men, saved or unsaved. That which is specific that comes to those who are saved, the grace that provides salvation. Then there's access to grace beyond that and that's accessed through humility.

Well, how do we reach the point of humility? Well for me in a testimonial way, and I think for many of us, we have to go out of our minds. Because the mind is the trap to the spiritual fool, but to God, the mind is a tool. Recall that the man who worships... (Say that again) The mind is a trap to the spiritual fool, because remember the Bible tells us the spiritual fool is the one who says in his heart there is no god. So the mind is a trap to the man who says there is no god. But to the man of God, the one who is saved, he now views his mind properly. It is a tool to be used to the glory of God. It is no longer a trap. But to escape the trap, we have to go out of our minds. Because as long as we are limited to our minds, we cannot come to God; because God is bigger than our minds. That's the point that I'm making. And that recalls the expression you've heard me say several times before. The man who worships only what he understands will always have his god be smaller than his understanding. And thus, he's really worshipping his understanding; that is to say his mind. So no person can worship God if he doesn't go out of his mind,

because our God is so much bigger than our minds, how can we worship a god who is contained in our minds, that is to say in our understanding?

When we operate in our minds, limited to our minds, believing only that which we understand, that's pride. That's self worship. And James 4:6 also tells us God is opposed to the proud. So I'm speaking this in the context of accessing the further grace of God, beyond the salvation grace, but to do that, you have to go out of your mind. Because if not, you're in pride and if you're in pride, you're opposed to God. So, humility is in part explained by going out of your minds. The point is we have to come to the end of ourselves in order to meet God face-to-face. You can't seek the face of God if your experience of God is limited to what you understand in your natural mind. How can a finite mind ever understand omniscience? There will always be a mystery of God that circumscribes that which you understand.

Well, how do we go out of our minds? Well, we begin that transition by simply recalling what faith is. What is it? The assurance of things hoped for; the certainty of things not seen.

The next step is Hebrews 11:6 – without faith (that which I've just defined), without that, it is impossible to please God, for the one who comes to God must believe only two things—that He is and that He is a rewarder of those that seek Him. If you don't believe He is, you surely won't seek; if you believe He is, but think He hates you, you surely won't seek, so the only way to please God is to seek Him because that's what He wants because He loves you and the only way to do that is know He is and He is a rewarder of those that seek Him. That is the beginning of functioning in the faith realm.

Now we've seen Pascal's wager early in our discussion, so I won't belabor the point, but you remember Pascal, a French mathematician hundreds of years ago, was trying to witness to atheistic academic colleagues and so using logic, he was trying to bring them to the end of logic to help them to go out of their minds to be in deceit there to transcend their logic—namely God. _____ this little two point wager. Life has not point; I believe it has a point, if I'm wrong I lose nothing because I'm still hopeless since it has no point anyway. But if it has no point and if I believe it has no point, I'm right, but I gain nothing because it's hopeless anyway. So the atheist who believes he's right has nothing to gain, he's left in a hopeless situation.

Life has a point. Well, if I believe it has no point, I'm wrong and if I potentially lose everything because it has a point, I function as if it had not point, I didn't seek the point and I missed the point, the whole point of my existence. But that to be, life has a point, I believe it has a point, if you simply come to that point in your reasoning, you are now right and potentially gain everything because you now seek the point of life. And of the four possibilities, one AB, two AB, the only one offers any hope at all is to function in two B. He was trying to convince his academic colleagues to acknowledge by using logic, the limit of their logic, to function in the one option which offers hope which is God, Himself. Pascal, bless his heart, said two things that I've come across. I'm sure that he said many; this is one. The other, remember, he said in the final analysis, the only

two rational behaviors that a human being can exhibit. If you don't know God, seek Him and if you do know God, serve Him. And you can reduce it to those two rules using human logic. So in our minds, if we use logic to come to the end of logic, we begin to hope that there is a God. So in our minds, we realize that if there is a God and that God is against our best interests, we're still helpless and hopeless. So we take that next step. I'm using just logic, but I'm going to bring you to the end of logic and take you into faith. So in your mind, using logic, you begin to function with the only option that offers hope, that there is a God and now you make that slight _____ that there is a God and He cares about me. He is a rewarder of those that seek Him. So you begin to seek. But you still have nagging doubts at that point using only human logic that maybe you're wrong. Maybe there is no God or if there is a God, maybe He's against me, not for me and He's setting me up just to torture me in some fashion.

So at that point, we have hope in the sense that we wish that there is a God, but we don't have hope in the Biblical sense meaning optimistic expectation. So you're functioning in your logical mind, hoping to have hope but that's the only hope you have at that point—hoping to have true hope. So you're stuck here at the point of realizing that we cannot come to God by logic; but it is logical to try to come to God. And that's the end of Pascal's wager.

I Timothy 6:16 speaks of God Whom no man can see nor has seen. I John 4:12 says no man has beheld God at any time. So faith is the assurance of things hoped for. Well, okay. We can't see hope, we can't see assurance and we can't see God. So we have no certainty of what we cannot see. So we have no faith. We're trying to get there by human endeavor, but we can't get there by human endeavor, we come to the limit of human endeavor and say, well, I hope, I wish; but I don't have the assurance that what I'm hoping is true is actually true. At best at that point, we have positive thinking; but positive thinking is still helpless and hopeless if separated from God. So we now know at that point of human logic what faith is, we know that we don't have it, and we know that we can't produce it, and we know that we're helpless and hopeless without it.

So at that point, we've used the mind to come to the end of the mind. Well that's all good. It hasn't brought faith, but it is beginning to produce something else. That something else is humility; and remember, back to James 4:6 – God gives His grace to the humble.

Well, now let's shift gears and speak of what is grace. Since by grace, through faith, you've been saved so what's grace? Well, the common definition we use is unmerited favor. And, of course, that encompasses many things. One thing that it includes, that's definitely unmerited favor, is the empowering presence of God functioning in me as a Christian that enables me to be what He calls me to be and to do what He calls me to do. So the simple definition that I like, grace is the unmerited, omnipotence of God, operating on my behalf to His glory. Now recall Ephesians 2:8 – I'll read it and then I'll make a couple of substitutions. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Now, let's rephrase it using our definitions of faith and grace instead of just the words. For by the unmerited omnipotence of God

operating on your behalf and to His glory, you have been saved through the conviction of things not seen, the assurance of things hoped for as a gift from God. Faith comes from God because He loves you and He's full of grace because love is manifested as grace because who can merit anything before a Holy God? Remember? Holiness and sin? No man can merit anything before a Holy God. So if that God is going to exhibit His love to us, it has to be by grace because it can never be merited so if He is going to get it from Him to us, it has to be unmerited.

Well, how does He go about giving us faith? Romans 10:17 – Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Remember truth is how God views reality. What I'm giving to you is what I believe is the truth about how God views the reality of what faith is, what provokes it in His heart to give it, and how it comes. It's a principle given in the Word of God that that's it functions. Now God is sovereign and I suppose God could use another method. But this is His chosen method and it was His good pleasure to do it that way and it's good enough for me. This is the principle that we're to function by. So, do we hear the Word of God? The Holy Spirit gives the gift of faith, not just knowledge and the concept, but the gift of faith that what you have just heard in the Word is, in fact, true and is, in fact, how God views reality. We then begin to function in the absolute certainty that what we have heard is true even if we don't understand it and have no means by which to prove it. Then we take what has occurred within us, you know, the wind blows; you can see it, but you can measure the impact of it, you can feel the impact of it, and that's what happens in the inner man. It grew and I know not how; but I've gone from just wishing into the full certainty that what I've heard in the Word of God is truth and that link between the two is God Himself Who has given you the gift of certainty and the gift of assurance, rather than a vague wish, you see. Then we speak the Word of God that we now have conviction about to another person. Then the process continues. We've sown the seed of the Word of God and it grows, I know not how in the next person and the soil that he represents. Mark 4:27 – It grows, you know not how. When I start to think that I can make it grow if I just speak it right, I'm taking over the glory of God. Oh, and He will share that glory with no one. So we're to be faithful to plant the seeds; but we're never to think that we caused the growth. I will sow today some seeds, somewhere out there, someone will water the seed and that seed will grow, not because I said it right, but because it's the Word of God, and it's the power of God, and the life of God, it is God Himself because God and His Word cannot be separated, you see.

And it will accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. Not because I'm perfectly organized, not because He gave me a certain gift of express ability, not because I've given you a nice outline. All those things are done to the glory of God, but nothing happens except God Himself caused the growth, you see. So where in there can I glory? So I take whatever gifts He's given me, whatever revelations, whatever mental organization, and whatever speaking ability and I plant the seed. Oh, but I know functioning in humility I cannot cause that growth. There is nothing in me that can bring that to pass.

Well, God gives faith. Well, I think it's healthy to remind ourselves that someone can only give that which they have. So let's look at God's faith. Does God have faith? God

operates in perfect faith in Himself. He is omniscient; He knows all; thus, He knows all about Himself. He knows He is omniscient; He knows He is omnipresent; He knows He is omnipotent; and He knows that all that translates into sovereignty. There is no unbelief in God about God. Thus, God has total faith. God has total assurance of whatever He hopes for, the absolute certainty of things unseen. So with God, hope and certainty can be considered as synonyms. God has total conviction of things not seen that are not yet manifested. And that's the Scripture Romans 4:17 in the King James version – God Who calls those things which be not as they were. And remember, I've added just to flush it out—not to improve on what God said, but to help us understand in our present language what God said. He calls those things which are not yet; but which assuredly will be; because they flow out of the sovereignty of His Being as though they already were. That's simply Who God is.

So God has total faith in all aspects of Himself. God is a sovereign majestic creator king. He is a passionate lover and He is a fierce, but righteous judge. So His sovereignty never fails. His love never fails. His righteousness never fails. So God's faith is in God, not in a part of God. That's the gift that He gives us when we understand it and function in it properly. That's part of Genesis 1:27 – part of being created in the image of God. That means we're to operate as God operates. God has total faith in God; He gives us the gift of faith in God, so we have faith in God and not just faith in a God of our creation in our minds, we have faith in the God of creation and in all aspects of Himself. And we have no faith in anything else. When we have the fullness of faith in Him, we have the faith of Him if we understand Him. That's when the power of God is released in us to accomplish His purposes on Earth. But if we worship a lesser God, we may have faith in God; but the power that that faith can operate in is limited because our understanding of God is limited. But when we see God as He is, and our faith is in that God, then we quit functioning in our faith and start to grow in Who this God is Who we have faith in. So the faith of God is faith in God. God has total faith in Himself so when He gives us the gift of faith by His grace, it's faith in God and that's the faith of God. That's why He can give you that faith because it's His faith, you see. So the nature of God is faith in Himself. There is no shadow of doubt in God about Himself. And then we fulfill II Peter 1:4 – where it says, we are partakers of the divine nature. The divine nature includes total faith in Himself about Himself.

So let's look at my faith. So as I've now received faith from God, what faith have I received? Well, recall, I used my mind to come to the end of my mind by realizing my situation is helpless and hopeless if there is no God and if God is not a rewarder of those who seek Him. I began to hope, wish that there is a God and He's a rewarder of those who seek Him. But I had no assurance; that's where I was when I got crushed in my flesh—reduced to that little puddle of crying. But now I get a gift, not through positive thinking, not through convincing myself if I work hard enough at it, but an absolute gift from God that takes me from that vague thing called hope as a wish into the certainty that which I hoped for is true as a gift from God. That's when you pass from vague hope into faith as it's understood in the Bible. It's not something a human being can create. That's the problem with so much counseling. We're teaching people to much to think so much about positive thoughts about themselves. But that never will deliver anybody. It may

help you cope in some limited way temporarily with life's situations, but it's not going to deliver you from the futility of the human situation apart from God. That will only come by operating in faith in God.

So I now have assurance that there is a God and that that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him. And since He is and since He is a rewarder of those who seek Him, remember Pascal—there are only two rational behaviors a logical mind can do. If you believe there's a God, serve Him. So now I start to seek Him to know how to serve Him. Remember the crescendo of the delight of Moses. If you delight in me and I now know that you do, show me your ways that I may know Thee, that you may delight in me even more, you see. That's how I began to function as a response to the gift of faith given to me by my God.