

Faith – Part 2

Well, as you all remember, of course, we went to the beginning, to the Holiness of God to understand the sin of man, to reveal the foundation of the judgment of God against sinful man, and then the cross of Christ to reveal the solution that God has provided for our sin, came into the Kingdom through the doorway of salvation, spent several sessions exploring what salvation really is, and then beginning the discussion of working out our salvation. And every single thing that you do from the moment after salvation is in one way or another, working out your salvation. Finishing that, we moved on into faith, the fuel of the spirit realm and we began to look at faith. What is it? We looked at, remember, the Biblical definition. Thankfully we don't have to grasp or grope to find what faith is. It's the assurance of things hoped for. It's the conviction, the certainty of things not seen. We looked at natural faith, how it's in the mind. But spiritual faith comes from that which is deep within us, from the immaterial self because it's with the heart that man believes. We looked at our salvation; how it began with being born again, born of the Word of God, born of the seed of God, born of God Himself, indwelt by the Spirit of God. We looked at where that comes from; by grace, through faith. So faith is a mechanism; but grace is the motivation of the God Who is love; love exercises itself through grace and that grace then provides our faith for our salvation as a gift from God. Then, we'll look in more detail later, but we began to look at how we access evermore the grace of God and He gives that extra grace to the humble.

We went back to our beginning sessions to remind ourselves of how we have to go out of our minds and we used the next poster which is Pascal's wager to look at how the mind of man using logic that God has given us can come to the revelation, through logic, that everything is hopeless except searching for God. So remember, we don't come to God through that logic; but we demonstrate how logical it is that we come to God. And after coming to the end of our minds, then we come into faith as a gift from God. We looked at grace, unmerited favor and then past unmerited favor, I gave the supplementary definition that I like, the omnipotent power of God operating on my behalf. And I realize that omnipotent power is a redundancy or verbosity in English literature kind of terms. It's saying the same thing twice, but it rings true with me. Omnipotence is a word; but when I say omnipotent power, somehow it just penetrates me in a way that I use it even though I know that it's a redundancy. So the unmerited, omnipotent power of God operating on my behalf, motivated by His love is what grace is all about. We'll learn now and later that it's all by grace. And that is the one overriding, overarching foundational attribute of Christianity that differs from every other faith; the revelation of the grace of God, and that ultimately, it is all by grace.

We looked at how faith is imparted. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. That's the mechanism by which God has provided for faith to come. Quickened then, by the Spirit of God. Remember that a man can memorize the Bible and have no faith in the God of the Bible. So it takes the Spirit of God, working through the Word of God to provide the salvation experience. We looked at God's faith. Does God have faith? Well, there's no shadow of doubt in God about God. So, therefore, God has faith. He operates in total faith, in Himself and not just faith, but infinite faith. You cannot put

a limit to the faith that God has in Himself; because His very attributes are infinite. And God's faith is in all attributes of Himself; not just in His sovereignty, not just in His power, not just in His knowledge, not just in His wisdom, not just in His righteousness, but in the Godness of God. So God's faith in Himself is in all aspects of Himself. And when we say that we have faith in God, that's what it's supposed to mean; not faith in a God of our own description, not faith in a God of our own invention, not faith in part of God using our minds to exclude other parts of God that we find unpalatable or unpleasant; but faith in God means by definition faith in the God of the Bible, faith in how God views Himself, faith in the fullness of what God is. We looked at where it began, Hebrews 11:6 – God is and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

So, let's pick it up there; we touched on that last time, but I'm going to pick it up at that point as we go forward. So as I've received faith from God, what faith have I received? Recall then that we used our minds to come to the end of our minds by realizing that our situation is helpless and hopeless if there is no God and if that God is not a rewarder of those who seek him. If God hates me, then I'm worse off than if there is no God. I begin to hope and using hope here the way human race uses hope apart from God; hope being a vague kind of abstract thing, an echoing uncertainty about things. I hope it doesn't rain on the national title NCAA football game. But I don't know if it's going to rain or not, but I hope it doesn't. It's not really an expectation; it's a desire expressed as uncertain. That's how man uses the word hope. So when we use only Pascal's wager and that's all we have to come to the end of our minds; we hope there's a God, but we don't really have certainty that there is. It's a vague hope based on the desire of man. Oh, but then when you begin to receive the revelation that what you hoped for is, in fact, true; that's when you begin to receive the assurance that what you hoped is true, that's the assurance of what you hoped for. And that's when it becomes faith, when God by His grace, through faith, gives you the assurance of what before had been only a vague hope; that He is and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. That's when you pass from the hope in the vagueness of man's terminology into faith and then that faith is expressed as a different kind of hope—the hope of the Bible, Christ in me, the hope of glory. It's now an optimistic expectation with certainty. It's not a vague thing of questioning and wondering if that which you desire will actually come to pass. That's when you know there is a God and that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Now since He is and since He is a rewarder of those who seek Him, how do I then begin to seek Him? Well, all of you know the answers. The two primary methods are prayer and through His word. He rewards me then when I seek Him in prayer and seek Him through His Word, He rewards me. And that's why I like the interpretation of Genesis 15:1 in the King James Version – Fear not Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. Because whatever reward God would give us other than Himself would be less than Himself. So what reward can God give us that's greater than Himself, the sovereign majestic creator King? So that translation just speaks to my heart. When God gives me Himself as a reward, what more can I pray for? What more can I desire? What more can I ask for? He is our exceeding great reward. So how does God show us Himself in New Testament Christian terms? Well, again, we don't have to wonder what the answer is. Hebrews 1:1-2 basically says – in these latter days (and that's what we're

living in now) God has spoken to us in His Son. We don't have to have a vague theology; God sent His Son to planet Earth to reveal Himself—not just the way to Him, but to demonstrate, model for us and reveal to us how God views reality.

Next poster. So as we continue to seek Him, at one point along the way or the other, maybe even as part of this teaching series, we begin to receive further revelations about this God. This God is a sovereign majestic creator King; He is a passionate lover; and He is a fierce but righteous judge. You remember, notice I said He is this and He's this, and He's this. He's not one of these; He's not two of these; He's not some little aspect of these; He is the fullness to infinity of all of these essential characteristics working in harmony in a way that transcends the ability of the mind of man to fully grasp; but know that you know that you know that He is all these things. And those essences play out in one way or another to give us this series of revelations which has been the whole bulwark of the foundational revelations we've talked about to this point. He is holy. This God is other than. And then we realize that compared to this Holy God, we are ungod. Remember? Love is relational, relational is choice. If one choice is God, every other choice is ungod. And we learn from when we grasp His holiness; we learn how ungod we are. Every aspect of ourselves; there's none who does good; there's none who seeks God. We are to the uttermost sinful, ungod when compared to the other than Holy God. That sets the stage for the judgment of God which leads to the reality of Hell where we looked in the unsaved condition at the absolute horror ultimately of the lake of fire for all eternity. Oh, but it doesn't stop there, thank God. Because we then receive the revelation that God Himself, Jesus the Son of God came to earth in the form of a man and paid the price for all of my sins. Imagine that! That's not just a trite saying. That's a foundational truth of how God views us and what He did to provide the solution. He could have stayed outside of time; He didn't even have to create time. Once He created it, He could have remained outside it. I came to save the world, not to judge the world. He could have stayed in Heaven and judged the world; but He couldn't have stayed in Heaven and saved the world; because He had to come to Earth in the form of a man; He had to live the sinless life and so on in order to become the Lamb of God. And when we receive the gift from God, by grace through the gift of faith, the assurance of the truth of that; that's when we have gone from some vague kind of thing called hope in human terms into oh, faith, hope, and love. We now have hope, the optimistic expectation, Christ in me, the hope of glory that I will spend eternity with my God, not because of merit in myself. Who is adequate for these things? Who can save themselves? Who can take their dead spirit and bring it to life? No man can do that, but God. Remember Ephesians 2:8 (to me, the most powerful words in the Bible, here's what you were) – children of wrath, servants of Satan, but God. Oh, imagine that! What conjunction could ever be more powerful in human language than that, in spite of how holy He is, in spite of how ungodly we were, He projected Himself into time, gave up the glory of Heaven. He could have selfishly stayed there and let us go to Hell. Oh, but not this God; because He is love, projected Himself into time to then give us the gift of salvation, the new birth, the new creation, born of the Spirit of God. And that God indwells us. Imagine that! By grace through faith, and that not of myself, it is a gift from God.

It's always worth reminding ourselves about faith because our fallen natures are so prone to begin to look at faith as the object rather than God as the object. My faith is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And when that faith is in the Son of God; John 10:30 Jesus said the Father and I are One. Remember the horizontal axis of the Trinity where Father equals Son equal Spirit? There is one God existing in three Persons. So when my faith is in Jesus, in the fullness of the Son of God, then simultaneously, I have faith in God because you can't separate one from the other. So my faith is not in me, my faith is not in faith, my faith is not in my faith, my faith is in God and specifically in Jesus, His Son. And that faith in God has to embrace all three aspects of His character. That's when you have saving faith; but saving faith isn't enough. Why? Because God is love and love is a passion for oneness. And God doesn't feel that His love is fulfilled until your mind is renewed where you have only His thoughts. When you continue to have a series of ungodly thoughts, you are in union with Him, your eternity is secure; but you're not in unity with Him because your unrenewed mind is operating outside His mind. Oh, He's delighted that you're His child, but He's not satisfied. Why? Because you're not in oneness with Him. And the whole point, remember John 17:(roughly 21 through 23) – I pray that they may be one, even as You, the Father, is one with Me, the Son. The unity of the Trinity—that's what He wants us to come in to. With each other, yes; but primarily each other becoming one with Him and as we all become one with Him; we will simultaneously become one with each other. So the goal isn't that I come into unity with each of you independent of oneness with God, the goal is that I come into oneness with God by being transformed through the renewing of my mind and simultaneously become one with anyone else who is on that same pathway. Because I can't head there and you head there without becoming one with each other, you see. So that's the outflow of the love of God is that ultimately we all come into oneness with Him; and thus, secondarily oneness with each other. II Peter 1:5 (King James Version) – Add to your faith virtue and to virtue, knowledge; and the sequence goes on, but I'm going to stop with that for the purposes of this talk.

So what knowledge do I add to my faith? Well, the knowledge of God. Your faith is in God; thus, the power of your faith cannot be ultimately more powerful than the God in Whom your faith is existent. That's why if life seems too big, it's just means that your vision of God is too small. Because when your vision of God matches the God of the Bible, life will never seem too big. It'll have its unpleasantness; but you take the unpleasantness and use it to the glory of this God and use the unpleasantness to reveal the attributes of this God to people who are observing your behavior in seeing, oh, you're demonstrating faithfulness to God. The world may kill me, but I will show you how man dies when his confidence is in God and not confidence in the fleshly existence on planet Earth. So as we aggressively pursue the knowledge of God, our faith seems to grow. But more commonly, it is not our faith that is growing; it's our knowledge of God that is growing. We learn that He really is omnipotent. And if God be for us, who can be against us that matters at all? He really is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. We learn of our future paradise with Him and move from a vague hope of man into the certain hope that flows out of faith in that God and in the faithfulness of that God. We learn of His love; we learn of His goodness and His faithfulness. As we learn of His love, we hope it's true. That's where we start, you see. Oh but then, by grace, He gives

us the gift of assurance that what we hoped for is in fact true and true beyond anything that we had ever asked or thought before. We now have faith that it's true. And to our faith then, we add knowledge. We hope that knowledge is true and then we receive by grace the gift of assurance that it is true and thus you seem to increase in faith.

That's why I drew up the next poster that serves as your handout for today. And there's nothing overwhelming about this. When we pray to increase our faith, let's start with the unsaved condition. Number 1. We have nothing. Now, of course, every man is without excuse; technically every man has some revelation of God just by looking at creation. But in regard to salvation, we have nothing. And then we receive knowledge. You know I may testify to an unsaved person about Jesus Christ as the Son of God and what He's done for us. So that person has now received knowledge, so we go to line 2. He now has knowledge to a certain degree. But he has no assurance that that knowledge is in fact true. Remember a man can memorize the Bible and have no faith in God. So knowledge does not equal faith. You've got to get the assurance that what you hoped for is true. The certainty that your knowledge is in fact true and that assurance can only come from God. The mind of man who tries to conjure it up is simply doing the best of the human condition to use positive thinking trying to fake until you make it (as the saying goes). But when that assurance comes, that's when you quit dealing with vagueness and you quit dealing with uncertainty because there is no uncertainty. God is; He is a rewarder of those who seek Him; He is love and He loves me; and let me tell you how I know that. He came from Heaven to Earth, went to the horror of the cross, to the fullness of the horror of Hell so He could spend eternity with me. I mean, is that not love? Oh, that's love. Let me tell you about the love of God. And when you have that assurance, you drop down to line 3. You know have knowledge and assurance. See, you've got faith; but we don't stop there; to our faith we add what? Knowledge. You keep seeking God through His Word, seeking God through prayer and then you get increased knowledge. Now you're down to line 4. You have increased your knowledge; but you have the same level of assurance because you've not yet received the gift of faith that that new knowledge is in fact true. It hasn't penetrated your heart, you see. Oh, but now, God again gives you the gift of assurance that that increased knowledge is in fact true, by grace, through faith and that not of yourself, is a gift of God. So now, you receive the assurance of your new knowledge is in fact true. Now on line 5, you've increased your knowledge and you've increased your assurance. You have it; but you have received it from God, so you now have it. Well, then you revert to line 3. And that's all the Christian walk is from there on out. So when you pray, increase our faith, this is how it comes. But if you sit on your hands and don't seek God through prayer, don't seek God through His Word, then your faith is not going to increase.

Can we negate the process? Well yes we can by not being engaged in it. John 14:16-17 – And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper that He may be with you forever. That is the Spirit of truth. And notice in that verse that the Holy Spirit is our helper, not our doer. We're always fond of saying, it's all God; ultimately yes, but practically speaking, He's given us a walk to walk. He's given us choice that we may choose Him and not choose ungod to reciprocate His love. That's our only act of worship; that's all we have to give our God is to take our next thought and choose Him

instead of something else. God is not opposed to effort; He calls for it. He is opposed to earning. We give our full effort knowing that when all is said and done, we truly earn nothing before a Holy God. Yes we receive rewards in Heaven; but if our focus is only on the rewards and not on bringing glory to God, then we're still operating in our self centered lives. So we receive the rewards, not because we sought the rewards, but because we sought to worship God to the fullest to bring glory to God to the fullest, to bring pleasure to God to the fullest. So we're aware He's told us that rewards come for doing that; but our focus is on bringing glory to Him not just on getting stuff from Him. So our effort is only our engagement in the process of what God is willing and working within us. It's our reciprocation of the love relationship. It's walking by faith. It is our only act of worship.

So we can negate it by not seeking more of God, more knowledge of God. Matthew 7:7 says – if you seek you find. If you seek, you find; it doesn't say if you don't seek, you find. The corollary of that, if you reverse it (which I think is true) if you don't seek, you don't find. Or by not using what we have found and this is where most of us (I think) live and breathe, by not engaging in warfare according to what we already know to combat our thoughts. We tend to think of the battle as something out there, but in reality, the battle is over your next thought. The battle is a lifestyle, not an event. It's not something that occurred five years ago and you came through it; and the next one will occur three years from now. The battle is a moment by moment walk with God over your next thought. II Corinthians 10:5 – we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. Well, what is that? And we're taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. The next thing that's exalting itself against the knowledge of God is that next thought coming out of your unrenewed mind. That's where the battle is fought on a foundational level. And that's simply part of Matthew 25:21 –you are faithful with a few things; I'll put you in charge of many things. You see, we have a tendency to pray for more knowledge of God, to pray for more revelation, to pray for more faith, and that's all good.

But we tend to do that while not being faithful over capturing every thought and destroying every lofty thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God that we already have. So we pray for more of that which we are defaulting in using. If we're not faithful over the knowledge that we do have, is it to be expected that God will put us in charge of even more knowledge? If I gave you a hundred dollar bill and you immediately set a match to it, should I give you another hundred dollar bill, you see? And I'm not being legalistic; I'm not putting guilt on people; I'm saying this is the Christian walk. What do you have to exalt God other than your next thought, your next choice? Because that's what your next thought is, you see. And you're not going to be transformed by the renewing of your mind into the likeness of Jesus Christ unless you are acknowledging that; because that next thought coming out of the unrenewed mind is exalting itself against the knowledge of God that you have in your spirit and in your renewed mind. That's what choice comes out to be. It's the same choice that we define the origin of choice, remember? Between God and ungod. So if I contemplate another woman, sexually, what do I do with that; say, God, take it away? Well, it's okay to pray that so long as you engage in the battle by saying I'm united with my wife in holy matrimony,

other than matrimony. How can I model the character of the faithfulness of my God by being unfaithful to my wife, you see? If I'm not engaged in that battle, how can I meaningfully pray for God to take away the urge, you see?

So there's a role for each; God has His job and you have your job. His job is to provide the power to do that because apart from His power, you accomplish nothing. But you engage in it as an act of worship by capturing that thought and say look at this ugly thing I found rattling around in my unrenewed mind in Your holy temple; because I'm the temple of the Spirit of a Holy God, you see. And you know what to do with it. You're a consuming fire. Empower me now to keep walking that walk, to capture that thought that I'm not going to do anything that'll destroy my relationship with my wife, with my children, with my family, with my friends, with my church. I'm not going to do anything that will allow the world to look at me and say, just another Christian hypocrite with no power in his life, so why should I believe in his God? But you've got to take up the armor, put it on, get out the sword of the Word of God and fight that battle and not just say, God please do it. That's our role. So ultimately, everything is through the power of God; but He's given us the role to play, of engagement in the process by which we reciprocate the love relationship with Him, you see.

Well, how do I know my faith? By having it tested. Because untested faith is only theoretical. It may be real; it may be deception. Matthew 26:35 Peter says – I will never deny you. Later on in the same chapter, Peter denied Him three times. Romans 12:3 – I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Well because of our fallen natures, our unrenewed mind, we have a great tendency to think more highly of ourselves that we ought to think. Well, what about tested faith? Our faith is only known by us to be real to the degree that it has been tested. Now God, of course, knows the heart of man. He knows before the test if you're going to pass the test or fail the test; but we don't know, we presume we will. All prior tests prepare us for the next test. Remember David and how he prepared to face Goliath by recalling prior tests and how he passed them through the power of God. I Samuel 17:37 – David said, the Lord Who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, that God will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. And God did. Notice the difference between the faith of David and the faith of Peter. David's faith was in God; He will deliver me. Peter's faith was in himself; I will never deny you. Peter was functioning on natural faith in his own abilities; not spirit faith because spirit faith is always in the object of the faith which is God. Now I'm not insisting that this be doctrinal for you; but I believe that understanding that difference helps us to understand what Jesus meant in Luke 22:32 speaking of that (of Peter) – but I prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail. Well, that was before Peter's denials. Well then it looks as if Peter's faith failed and as if Jesus' prayer failed. But I believe Peter and Jesus are speaking of two different things. I will never deny you, is natural faith in your own abilities and it failed. But Jesus, I believe, is praying about spirit faith—that is to say faith in Jesus Christ, including His power over death. Peter hoped for that at the time of his denials, but he had no assurance of that or he would not have denied. He had no assurance of what he hoped for. Oh, but later when he rushed to the empty tomb, when he saw Jesus in His glorified body, then assurance came. Before he had heard what Jesus said, but he didn't have the

assurance of the fullness of the validity of what Jesus said. But now he had assurance of what he had previously hoped for. He had moved from natural faith into spirit faith and that faith did not fail; because church tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside down because he refused to be crucified in the same manner of his Lord because of his unworthiness to do so, you see.

Well, I think that our time is up enough that I will stop at that point. Keep looking back at your faith outline. If you didn't bring it, look at it when you go home and you'll see that we're working through that outline.