

### Faith – Part 3

Of course I can't go back through the whole series to those who haven't been here; but remember we looked at the foundational revelation, the Holiness of God to prepare our hearts to understand the sin of man. And using those two components to understand, therefore, the judgment of God and then to understand the remedy for that judgment which is the cross of Christ. And then we came into the kingdom through the doorway of salvation. We looked at salvation in regard to what it is; and then we looked at salvation as to working it out, and learned that every single thing we do from the moment we come into the kingdom through the doorway of salvation is in one way or another working out our salvation. Then we moved into faith as the subject—faith, the fuel of the spirit realm. And sometimes, I think, that teachings on faith are so common that they lose their power; but I would encourage you to put aside preconceived notions and awaken your heart today to be fertile soil to receive the seeds of the Word of God that will be dropped in. On the outline, we're on the backside of the page now. We began to look last week at how we know faith; and we know faith by having it tested; and we used the models (or began to use them) of David and Peter—that is to say, David, when he went out to face Goliath, said my God Who delivered me from the lion and the bear will deliver me from this Philistine. So he drew from his past experiential knowledge of the involvement of God in his life in order to face the next test. Whereas Peter was saying, I will never deny you. In other words, Peter by contrast had faith in himself, not faith in his God in order to withstand the test.

Now when our faith is tested, there is one of two possible outcomes. We pass the test as David did. Well then whenever David faces his next test, he will not say, my God Who delivered me from the lion and the bear will deliver me from this next test. He will say, my God Who delivered me from the lion, the bear, and Goliath will deliver me from the next test. David has entered that virtuous cycle of passing the test. Each test then passed, becomes a greater revelation of God's grace as the unmerited, omnipotent, empowering presence of God in my life to enable me to pass the test. He thus has more confidence in his God to pass the next test because of his experience with God in his prior tests. But his confidence is always in the power of God, not in himself. He has no faith in the power of the circumstances; he has no faith in the power of his faith; he has faith in the power of his God to see him through the next test. Remember, Saul tried to induce David to face Goliath by putting on the armor of Saul. That is to say to take up the shield, the sword, the spear of Saul in order to face Goliath. But that's not what we as children of God do. We never take up the armor of this world in order to overcome the world. We put on the armor of God in order to overcome the world. If we don't pass the test, then obviously we fail the test and that's what Peter did. And then we lose faith in ourselves and that's a good thing because we should lose faith in ourselves and we should lose faith in our faith. What we learn when we fail in the test and don't stand in faith, is we receive the conviction that our faith was not in God or at least not the God of the Bible. When convicted of that we then do one of two things; one of which is godly and one of which is ungodly. The ungodly one is self condemnation; we do what Peter did. We run from God because of the self condemnation of our observed faith. But to do that is to exhibit less faith in God and His grace than we have faith in the value and worth of our failure,

which is to go back and position ourselves again to judge God, to judge that our failure carries more weight than the blood of Jesus Christ does to pay the price for my failure.

Thus, we grow in knowledge of ourselves and our inadequacy; we are weak and inadequate. But living in condemnation does not increase our knowledge of God if we stay there. It simply increases our knowledge of ourselves and our inadequacy and our continuing to judge God if we stay there. When you live in self condemnation after a failure, you really have compounded the problem; because when you fail the test, you have failed the primary test which is to have faith in the empowering presence of God operating on your behalf in the test. But when you run in self condemnation, you now add the secondary failure of failing to have faith in God as grace evermore abounding test. Now the godly way to respond is repentance. That's to run to God in spite of your failure to confess your failure. When you do that you may have failed the original faith in God's omnipotent power operating on your behalf test; but by running to Him with that failure, you pass the faith in God's grace manifested as forgiveness test. By receiving God's forgiveness of your apparent failure, your knowledge of His grace grows. His grace doesn't grow; you're already floating in a sea of grace; it's just you didn't know how big that sea was. But when you run to Him with your failure, your knowledge of the grace of God that already existed grows and then you grow in preparedness to face another test, even the potential failure in that test. Because Luke tells us in chapter 7, verse 47, he who is forgiven much, loves much. So the greater the revelation of what you are forgiven (including your most recent failure), the greater your revelation of the grace of God, the greater your revelation of the love of God that expressed itself as that grace. So when you run to God with repentance in your recent failure, you are growing in the revelation of the grace and the love of God. And we know love by this, that He first loved us. That's how we grow in love. So a failure on your part, taken to God in repentance, becomes fuel for greater love from God to you in revelation and you to God in reciprocation, you see.

So, therefore, your faith is not in your success or failure; your faith is in God regardless of your recent success or failure. Then you receive the revelation in experiential knowledge of Romans 5:20 – where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Then you fulfill Romans 8:28 – and have all things work together for good, even your most recent failure that you took to Him in repentance. Because nothing is failure in an ultimate sense that increases your revelation of the grace of God, increases your revelation of the value of the blood of Jesus, increases your revelation of the love of God, and that inspires you to go out and face your next test without fear of failure, you see. So it is not failure to have failed and then grown as a result of it in all those revelations of God in Whom your faith is to be in. So your faith isn't in your success or failure in the test, your success is in God, specifically in His Son.

And that takes you to a faith that overcomes. Well, we've learned what faith is, but what is overcoming? Well first look at what it is not. It does not mean changing your circumstances, although your circumstances may change. It doesn't mean changing the outcome, although your outcome may change. It doesn't mean changing the people around you, although people around you may change. So we may overcome many

things en route to the ultimate overcoming, but the ultimate overcoming is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ even unto death. It means confessing Jesus right up to the moment you take your last breath, whatever the circumstances. And that was modeled for us by Jesus, but sometimes Jesus seems so big that we tend to kind of dismiss the example. But when we look at Stephen, the first Christian martyr who is speaking the truth of God in faith though everything in the circumstance was hostile, threat of death was impending, in fact death was fulfilled; but as he stood there preaching the faith of Jesus Christ, with the face of an angel and saw the Heavenly vision of Jesus standing to greet him into Heaven, saying effectively Stephen, you have overcome. I'm standing to welcome you with eager anticipation into your eternal destiny in My presence with Me forever. That is overcoming in an ultimate sense. Revelation 2:26 – And he who overcomes and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. Revelation 2:10 – be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 12:11 – and they overcame him, the accuser of the brethren because of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony and they did not love their life even to death.

Well how are you to be faithful unto death? Well by having faith, but remember, not just faith, not you, not faith in you, and not faith in your faith. Faith only has value dependent upon the object of the faith, by having faith in God and specifically in the way that God has expressed Himself to us in His Son, Jesus Christ. And it's not just faith in a Jesus of your creation; it's not faith in a Jesus as you want Him to be; it's not your own ideology; it's not your own positive thinking; it's by faith in the one Jesus Who is true and that is the Jesus as stated in the Bible. So we operate by faith at every moment of our lives, we just don't know it. You see, we have faith in what we fear. If we fear death, we have more faith in death than we have faith in God. Fear is faith; it's just faith in the wrong thing. It's faith in something other than the God of the Bible. So is there any legitimate fear? Well, those who have been in this series know the answer. Matthew 10:28 – do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. In other words, the fear of the Lord is the only legitimate fear. So what God is telling us is, children consolidate your fears because there's only one legitimate fear and that's the fear of the Lord. So how do we lose our fear? (Comment from Jason: I hate to interrupt, but I can hardly contain it. There is a saying that I've heard that says a man who is feared by everyone is not as powerful as the man who fears nothing and that it's one of my favorite sayings. I've never interrupted your class before and I'm sorry that I did now; but it's just that was...Buddy: All authoritarians work by provoking fear, but they can only provoke fear in those who do not have the fear of the Lord.) That's part of our freedom in Christ and we're going on to face that a little bit closer as we go forward.

So how do you have awe and reverence of God when you're facing death? Well, it's by faith in God, including God as having power over death. That's why Jesus could say I am the resurrection; I am the life. So we do it by faith in Jesus Christ, including the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That why the resurrection had to be lumped with the cross of Christ; it can be distinguished, but not separated from the cross of Christ. If you have no faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb, you'll have no faith in the cross of Christ when you face your test and ultimately no faith in God and you will continue to

live in the fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15 – since then the children share in flesh and blood (that's us), He, Himself (that's Jesus) likewise took of the same that through death, He might render powerless him who had the power of death (that is the devil). Remember, the devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy; and that Jesus might deliver those, who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. See part of your freedom in Christ is to lose the fear of death. Satan comes to kill. Satan comes to control. Satan comes to be anti-God, anti-Christ; so what is the main mechanism that he uses to do that? Deception! What's the major part of that deception? To provoke fear in you of something other than the fear of God. And notice how Jesus did this. He did die—thank God. That's how He paid the price for our sins. But He didn't do it by death, because by death we carry the implication it stopped there. No, He did it, notice through death. He went through death to come out the other side. So the ones who have the fear of death are literally in slavery all of their lives. They don't truly believe that Jesus went through death. They don't believe, therefore, that they as born again children of God will go through death. They don't believe that after going through death that Heaven awaits them, eternity in communion with your God. They do not believe that to die is gain. Fear of death means no faith that to die is gain; and thus, ultimately no faith in God. The point I'm making by that is that every man walks by faith every moment of his life. And whatever you have fear in, you are giving glory to and remember God shares His glory with no one. So when you're operating by fear of anything other than in the fear of the Lord, you're giving glory to that other thing and stealing it from the glory of God.

So how do we overcome? Well, how are we faithful to the end? I John 1:4 – this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Well faith in what? Faith in Jesus Christ. But not faith in Jesus as some vague theologic abstraction, no, this is personal. Colossians 1:27 – Christ in you the hope of glory. So I'm not just a man standing up here to give you certain little tidbits to tuck away in your memory, I'm speaking out of the Christ in me, the hope of glory. And He's not just in you in a passive impotent sense, like just dwelling there. I John 4:4 – greater is He Who is in you than he who is in the world. Well, how do you know that Jesus is greater? John 16:33 – Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. You see, we're not dealing with theory; we're dealing with fact. What is truth, remember? It's how God views reality. What am I speaking to you? How God views the reality of death and the fear of death. Jesus did overcome the world and He overcame it in every dimension. He lived without sin, in the flesh, tempted as we are, yet without sin. He did nothing contrary to the will, the purpose, and the plan of God, nothing contrary to the character of God. Then He overcame the ultimate experience of our worldly existence, namely death, went into it and through it, and came out the other side. But that same Jesus lives in us. That same power is available to us. That same deliverance from the captivity of the fear of death is now ours. And when we by faith in the legitimate Jesus Christ of the Bible and His resurrection, are delivered from the fear of death, then we have swallowed the camel and then we no longer strain at the gnat of any lesser thing that provokes fear, because everything else is a lesser version of death itself which is the ultimate thing that flesh and blood creatures dread. That's to manifest (not have), manifest the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Now anything less than that remains sin. We don't like to think of it in those terms but Romans 14:23 tells us – whatever is not of faith is sin. It is either/or. Remember we

approach life in our Christian walk as if there's Christ-like over there and other stuff over here and then a broad segment in the middle that's kind of spiritually neutral. But that's not what God tells us about how He views reality. He'll tell you that your next thought is going to be either agreeing with Jesus and Who He is or agreeing with something else, contrary to Jesus. Luke 11:23 – he who is not for Me is against Me. And he who does not gather, scatters. So that every moment we are either gathering or scattering conversions for Jesus Christ. We're not neutral at any moment. We're either in faith in Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of man, the Lamb of God Who paid for our sins, went through death, came out the other side and waits to greet us like He did Stephen on that other side. Or, we are in faith in something else other than that and when our faith is in something else other than that, that's called rebellion, you see.

Let's address unbelief. To a Christian, unbelief means not believing in the things that I've just stated about Jesus, the Bible, the Word of God, the written Word, Jesus, the incarnate Word. It means believing something other than those things. There's no such thing in human existence as non-belief which means having no belief. That's because human beings are all created in the image of God; we have the capacity to know God, we know God by faith, thus, all human beings have a capacity for faith. In fact, all human beings, every moment of their existence, are walking by faith. They just don't know that they are. They all have a conviction of certainty of things not seen. Remember, in our preliminary discussion. The atheist has faith that there is no God, but he can't see that. The agnostic has faith that we cannot know if there is a God. But he cannot see that; but they have the certainty of things they can't see and base their lives upon it. That's called faith according to the Bible. The Universalist has faith that if there is a God, that that God is going to welcome every human being into eternity with Him. He can't see that, so he has faith not in the God of the Bible based on how God views reality; but he has faith in a god according to his personal preference and self construction, you see. He can't see it; he pronounces it, bases his life upon it, and thus, walks by faith in something he cannot see. So the ultimate deception of humanity is to say I cannot have faith. Because at every moment, every human being is at his root working by faith, not by sight. So the thing that differentiates human beings is not the presence or absence of faith, it is what is the object of that faith. Believing that one is not a faith creature while living by faith, is to live in denial. And, in fact, is just another symptom of pride. In fact, the next step is the following. As Christians we have the faith of Jesus Christ. We tend not to know that we have it. Romans 13:14 says – put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Well God wouldn't tell us to put on that which we do not have access to. Romans 12:3 – He has given each a measure of faith. Well that measure of faith is in Jesus or you wouldn't be a born again child of God. But by faith in Jesus, we have Jesus. Galatians 4:6 – God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. Romans 8:9 – But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. Colossians 1:27 – Christ in you, the hope of glory. Since we have the spirit of Christ in us, we have the faith of Christ in us. That's why I like the King James Version as it tells us in several different scriptures that I'll just robot for you; Galatians 2:16; 2:20; 3:22; and Philippians 3:9. All speak of having faith in Christ and thus, having the faith of Christ.

So how do we know that Jesus Himself had total faith? If we have His faith, how does that help us? It won't help us if we don't know the measure of His faith. Well, Romans 14:23 – what is not of faith is sin. So did Jesus sin? Hebrews 4:15 – He was tempted in all ways such as we are, yet without sin. Thus, Jesus never had a single moment that was not based on faith in God. If He had, it would have been sin and then He couldn't have paid our price for sin and we would have no Savior and would still be condemned in our sins. Now the faith that Jesus manifests every moment of His life in God includes the test beyond which there is no test. Remember, the cross of Jesus Christ. He walked by constant, unyielding faith in the Father to the point of being forsaken by the Father, while receiving the full wrath of the Father. There's no test beyond that test; thus, there's no test which could ever demonstrate lack of faith by Jesus in His Father, you see. Having faith like that; if you have that faith in you, do you think you will ever face a test that could transcend the faith that you have in you since you have the faith of Jesus in you? The problem is we focus on our faith and when we do, we're not focusing on who we have in us and then our faith is in our faith, not our faith in Jesus, the Holy Son of God, you see, Who walked by faith through the ultimate test.

So we don't usually need more faith and that's part of what Jesus meant when the disciples said increase our faith and He said if you have faith, here's what it will look like. We have faith in Jesus, so we need to our faith in Jesus, to add knowledge of what Jesus is and how available He is to us. And we do that by living in Him, not by living in our faith. Acts 17:28 – In Him we live and move and have our being. II Corinthians 5:7 – we walk by faith, not by sight. So we do walk by faith; but that faith is in Jesus, where we live and move and have our being. Our confidence is in Jesus, not in the strength or weakness of our faith. When our faith is in Jesus, we are in Him and then in Him we live and move and have our being; so how does that help you work out your salvation? When you walk by confidence in your ability to become like Him, you will fail. But when you walk by confidence in Him, not by confidence in your ability to become like Him, then you will progressively become like Him. It'll occur more as a byproduct of walking by faith in Him than it will by conscious intent on your part as a primary goal to become like Him. Because when you're trying to become like Him, your faith is in you and your efforts to do that. But when your faith is in Him, and you're growing in the revelation of Him, you quit paying attention to yourself and you quit paying attention to your faith; and you're now doing what Peter told us to fix your hope completely on what? The grace brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So you don't need more faith; you need more revelation of Jesus Christ that He is the Son of God, He is the Holy transcendent God, that He did pay the price for all your sins, past, present, and future. And that's when you begin to work out your salvation by reaching ahead to Heaven and bringing it to Earth. I John 3:2-3 – We know that when He appears (that's Jesus) we shall be like Him. That's Him. Well, how will we be like Him? Because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope purifies Himself just as He (Jesus) is pure. So the way to purification is not by focusing on your efforts to become like Him; the way to become pure is to progressively see Him as He is. And then you will become like Him by the process of abiding in the Jesus that you've progressively grown in the revelation of, instead of by primary intent focusing not on Jesus, but on your ability to become like Jesus. It's getting your eyes off of yourself and on to your Savior. That's one profound

truth about working out your salvation by walking by faith and not by your faith, by faith in Jesus, the object of your faith. And you do it as Philippians 2:12 says – with fear and trembling.

Let's go back to holiness, see if you don't regard God as Holy, as other than, as transcendent, you're not going to walk by faith in this Jesus and progressively become like Him, because you're always going to have those besetting doubts. What if He doesn't love me like it said? What if He isn't here to empower me? What will He do with my most recent failure? But when you're walking in the fear of the Lord, the awe and reverence, not only the power of God, but the love of God, and the grace of God, and the cross of His Son and all that that entails, then you will see Him as He is and you'll be purified progressively and become like Him as a secondary byproduct rather than a primary intent, you see. So when your focus is on your ability to become like Jesus, you'll have increasing pride as you think you are or increasing condemnation as you think you aren't. But when your focus is on seeing Jesus as He is, then you'll fulfill I Corinthians 1:31 – Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. Not boast on how much like the Lord you're becoming, not boast of how condemned you are compared to the value of the blood of Jesus because of your recent failure, your eyes are off of yourself and on to Jesus where it says fix your gaze on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. But if your gaze is on yourself and your faith, you will never fulfill that, you see. So we came into the Kingdom of God through the cross and through that doorway called salvation by faith in Jesus; and now we work out our salvation by living and moving and having our being as New Testament born again Christians by being in Him. That's what the Bible is talking about when it speaks of abiding in Him. And that's when you quit focusing on your faith; you're walking only by your faith in Jesus, your gaze is fixed on Him, your hope is fixed on Him, and that's when you overcome the world, you see. So long as you're fixed on the world, fixed on the next temptation, fixed on your faith or lack thereof, fixed on your performance or lack thereof, your gaze is not on Jesus, Who is the author and perfecter of your faith.

Well that brings us to the end of the initial lesson, if you will on faith, looking at what it is and how it's to play out. And next time we come together, we'll start into the next one which will continue some of these basic principles as we look at faith, walking by it, to amplify on some of this stuff that I've talked about today. So thank you for listening.