

Faith – Part 4

Went through holiness, sin, judgment, cross, came into the kingdom through the doorway of salvation; we looked at what salvation really is; and then we looked at working it out. And learned that everything we do from that moment on after our salvation is in one way or another part of the process of working out our salvation. Then we moved to faith, the fuel in the spirit realm, because without faith it's impossible to please God. And God will never give any person a written excuse from walking by faith. He never has—He never will, because that's the only way we can approach a transcendent God. Now how is a finite created being to approach an infinite uncreated being except by faith, not by sight? Then we move today, from faith—what is it, to walking by it.

So what I'm going to begin presenting today is a simple concept; but I think sometimes in its simplicity, it tends to be overlooked. So we looked at the Biblical definition of faith—that is Hebrews 11:1 – faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. In other words, faith represents an absolute certainty about things which are not seen; because we are talking about the spirit realm and the spirit realm is not visible to the natural eye. We cannot see hope; we can't see assurance; we can't see conviction; we can't see faith. So all these concepts are things that are intangible so to speak, at least in regard to compared to the tangibility of the physical realm. But we do see faith indirectly which is how we see many things in the spirit realm. It is like Jesus described about being born again. It's like the wind, John 3:8 – the wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it; but you do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So we don't see the wind directly; we see the wind indirectly by observing its impact on the world around us. Well, how do we see faith? We see it by its impact in ourselves and in the world around us. II Corinthians 5:7, the core Scripture – we walk by faith, not by sight. Now we see faith indirectly by seeing its impact that it has on someone's life around us. That's part of our testimony, our nonverbal testimony if you will.

So what does it mean when we say walking by faith? Walking by faith has two meanings. We commonly use it to mean only one of those two meanings. So I'm going to talk about the common usage in an abbreviated form to get started and then move from that into the less common meaning that I think we need to spend more time on. Walking by faith, we think of as meaning empowered by, fueled by, dependent on. That is the usual way and that is, in fact, certainly a true concept. I John 5:4 – This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. So we overcome the world by being fueled by, empowered by, dependent on, our faith. In Hebrews chapter 11, the ones who overcame by faith, by being dependent on God right up to death, we called champions of faith. And those who didn't do such a thing along the way, the Bible commonly addresses as, ye of little faith. So since the Bible tells us of such outcomes, then we tend to behave like the disciples in Luke 17:5 and pray increase our faith. We pray regularly for more faith. Well that's appropriate, that's good, that's Biblical. It acknowledges that faith can be weak, that faith can grow, and that faith comes from God. So with us on firm Biblical ground, when we pray, increase our faith. A prayer such as that is based on humility and based on God as our resource for all things; because every good and perfect gift comes from above. However, if that's all that we do then it can lead to problems; because

throughout the Bible, throughout the spirit realm, there are two frames of reference that appear to be in conflict but always have to be reconciled and held in a tension state, if you will, between the two.

So let's look at the fallen nature of man; that propensity to sin that still exists (even in the Christian) and see how that man commonly interprets faith outcomes if the only frame of reference that he uses is walking by faith, meaning empowered by. If our faith does not fail—that is to say if our faith proves sufficient to meet the test of any certain circumstance, then how do we interpret it? We tend to thank God, and that's true, and that's good. But it also tends to be at least a little bit contaminated by human pride. We tend to take at least partial credit for the success of our faith being strong enough to meet the adversity. We also have a tendency to view those around us who are weak-kneed in such circumstance as somehow being a little less effective and somehow lesser Christians. We try to teach them how to do it like we do it, to walk by faith so that they can be as strong as we are. We tend to at least hope that somebody was watching to see us walk by faith strong enough to overcome the circumstance. If they see us, we hope that they tell others about what they saw. If they didn't see us, we'll commonly find a way to gently work it into the edge of a conversation so that it's somehow called to their attention. Now, that's all good if it is done in total humility before your Holy God. The problem is that faith success is not usually done in total humility, but tends to include at least some false humility, false humility being best understood as pride in appearing humble. We tend to be better at being proud in appearing humble than we tend to be at being humble itself.

So in a way, we've begun to deal with the fallen nature of man with faith success. Well, what about faith failure? If we see our faith as not being strong enough to have withstood a certain circumstance, then how do we tend to interpret that? If we appropriately credit ourselves for the failure, then we have a tendency to want to run from God in condemnation as opposed to running to the throne of grace. But even those who run in condemnation tend to have an even more insidious interpretation of events that's just beneath the surface of that one. The fallen nature of man has a tendency to have a response similar to Adam. Remember when God confronted him about having eaten the forbidden fruit – Genesis 3:12 – Adam says to God, the woman that You gave me has caused me to eat the forbidden fruit. In other words, we're all hungry for an excuse; pride makes excuses, humility makes adjustments. Here we see Adam; it's another reason why we should never drift from the first three chapters of Genesis; because all you need to know about human behavior in front of a Holy God is contained in those three chapters. So we tend to think the following sequence. Faith comes from God; I had already asked for more faith, thus, if I did not have more faith sufficient to meet the circumstance, then God is at fault. The faith that You gave me has proven inadequate for the circumstance. We take Romans 12:3 where it says – God has allotted to each a measure of faith; and our interpretation tends to become – God must have not parceled out a measure of faith sufficient to empower me to meet the circumstance. The measure of faith that He gave me was simply inadequate and caused me to fail. I did my part by asking; what more can I do? God did not do His part by giving; so thus, the shortcoming is on His side. Now of course, continuing to have that interpretation, is to continue to

judge God which, remember, is the root of all sin. So we've looked at the common usage of walking by faith as meaning dependent on, fueled by, empowered by. We saw its good points as being humility and viewing God as our ultimate resource for everything that's good. We saw that the usual response to failure is to pray for more faith. That's Biblical, that's good, if it's done in humility. The problem is that it's not sufficient. If that's all that we do, then we tend to run the risk of continuing to drink milk and not eat the meat of the Gospel.

So let's begin now to look at the second meaning of walking by faith. It can also mean walking in accordance with or walking in a manner consistent with. A law-abiding citizen is said to live by the law. Well that doesn't mean that he's empowered by the law; it means that he's living his life in accordance with the law that has been given. A ball player who plays by the rules doesn't mean that he's empowered by the rules; it means he's playing in accordance with the rules for the game. So we need to operate in both frames of reference—that is to say empowered by and in accordance with. We tend to function more with the first understanding than with the second understanding. Thus understanding the second is our greater spiritual need. What we tend to interpret as inadequate faith is usually not inadequate faith at all. Most commonly, it is our refusal to walk in accordance with the faith that we have received. Now to understand this, let's regress a bit and go back to the beginning—to some of our elementary concepts. To the Holiness of God and look at His three major essences that we have to see work in harmony at all times. God is the sovereign majestic creator King of Genesis 1:1; Who in the beginning created the Heavens and the Earth. He is the passionate lover of I John 4:8 where it simply says – God is love. He is the fierce, but righteous judge. Habakkuk 1:13, remember, the prophet speaking of God – Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil; You cannot look on wickedness with favor.

Well we're going to move on now to take the word faith that we toss around so easily in the context of these three critical essences of God. Now always remember that words and diagrams are limited in their capacity to capture the fullness of a Holy God spiritual truth. Words are symbols of reality, but not the reality itself. The truth of God will always be greater than any words and any symbols and any diagrams that I can use to describe that truth. So I'm going to pick certain words on the next poster to use to make a point. But don't get too hung up on which words I'm using and how I'm using them. Simply be open to the spiritual truth that I'm driving at. Here we're taking the word faith and beginning in a way to shine it through a prism like God did in I Corinthians, chapter 13 where love is put through the prism and we're seeing different components of love...such as love does not seek it's own, love does not take offense, and so on. Our faith is not just faith as an abstraction; our faith is to be in God. So before we can interpret a phrase such as faith in God, we must recall Who God is. That poster that I'm showing you here helps us to do that. What I want you to see from this as we go forward is that faith actually has various components or essences just like love does. So if our faith is in God, our faith must relate to God in all of His critical essences. Now on its most elementary level drawing such a poster as this implies that God is, that He actually exists. Thus, faith in God begins with faith that He is and you base your life on that fact. That's good and necessary, but not necessarily sufficient. Your faith in God must be also based on God as

He is, not on a God of your own mental creation. Now trust usually speaks to motive. When we say that we trust someone, we're thinking in terms of their motive. We know that the motive is pure if we know that that person is love and, in fact, loves us. If that person loves us, then they will never do anything contrary to our best ultimate interest. Since I John 4:8 tells us that God is love, then if our faith is in God, it is intrinsically to be based on the knowledge that He loves us—that is to say that we trust His motive toward us, that He will always operate in our best interest whatever circumstance unfolds in our natural lives.

The word believe addresses the question of truth. We can believe only that which has believability; in our modern language—credibility. We believe God only when we believe that He is truth and is the source of all other truth. We truly believe God only when we define truth as what God is and how that God views everything else. Now believe actually arises out of all of the essences of God because the most foundational revelation about God is, He is truth and the source of all truth. In fact, to regress a moment, we can only trust the motive of God by knowing that He is love and believing that as truth. Thus, even trust of motive as part of faith is based on believing that God is truth as He tells us in His Word that He is love. So you can't separate truth from any of the concepts of God; but I'm simply choosing to relate it here to the righteous judge. God can only judge righteously when He has access to all truth—that is to say if He is omniscient and totally righteous. Because you can't really believe someone who is not omniscient because they may tell you something that's meant to be true, but since it's based on partial knowledge of truth, that in fact may prove to be ultimately untrue. So when you say that you believe God as the source of truth, embedded in that is to say that He is omniscient and is righteous in how He will apply that omniscience. If He has access to all truth, but is not righteous, He may lie to you about what truth is. So when you say that you believe God, embedded in that is to believe that He is the source of all truth and will always righteously operate in that truth. He's obviously the source of all truth because this is His universe; He created it; it's His; it operates by His rules and principles. So God is truth; He's the source of all truth; He's the whole truth; He's nothing but the truth. So if your faith is to be in God, it has to be based on God as truth. God as totally believable with no source of information from any other place exalting itself against the knowledge of this Holy God, you see. So the word believe has a lot embedded in it if it is to believe in God as God is, as He's told us about Himself in the Bible.

Now fear means to hold in awe and reverence. Now actually we stand in awe and reverence of all the Godness of God—that is to say His Holiness, His other thanness, the totality of Who He is. That includes His sovereign power, it includes His fierce but righteous judging, it includes His love, all the Omni's, His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. I have chosen to connect the word fear to His sovereignty; because usually when we use the word fear in our modern society, we're contemplating power. That's because of the other usage of the word fear in our modern language meaning dread and terror. Because we never have dread and terror of something which is not powerful and has no power sufficient to threaten us. By looking at God and looking at His three critical essences, we can now look at what faith in God has to mean. Faith in God relates

to the fact that God is, and it relates properly to what He is as He has revealed to us. So faith in God contains belief, trust, and fear. We cannot believe or have faith in what is not true; we can't have faith in what does not love us; and we can't have faith in that which does not inspire fear—namely awe and reverence within us. So faith in God that's truly rooted in the God of the Bible has to be rooted in all three critical essences of God. Anything else is faith in a lesser God of your own creation. He is; He is truth; He is love; He is righteous; and He is sovereign.

So let me give you an earthly example as we wind down today to simply reinforce these points. Suppose that I am old, profoundly disabled, in a wheel chair, and I'm trying to cross the busiest street in New York City at peak rush hour. I can't do it alone; I need help. So I receive various offers of help that I want to analyze in the context of what I'm trying to communicate of what faith in God must include. Suppose a four-year old child comes up to help me, says he will help me across the street. Well I trust his expression; I trust his motive; he has no ulterior motive; he sincerely wants to help me across the street for my best interest and outcome. I trust that what he's telling me is true insofar as he understands truth; but I don't believe that he possesses sufficient grasp of truth to safely escort me across this busy street. I don't have faith, I don't believe that he is able, to guarantee that he will take me across the street safely, however pure his motive. I also do not stand in awe and reverence of his power. So I trust the child; his motive is absolutely pure; but I don't have faith in him, as the repository of sufficient truth to guarantee my safety in crossing; and certainly don't have faith in him as a reservoir of sufficient power to accomplish the purpose that he tells me he wants to accomplish. So I decline his offer, though I fully believe the expression from his mouth. But to have faith in this child, I have to have faith in him as the source of sufficient truth to guarantee, faith in him as the source of sufficient power to guarantee, and faith in the purity of his motive to accomplish what he's expressing. So, no thank you, however pure your heart.

Suppose a young man then comes up and offers to help. But he's the same young man I saw yesterday snatch a purse and he did that by shoving someone into an alley across the street. It's across the street that I'm now trying to cross. So I stand in awe and reverence of this young muscular, vital young man, awe and reverence of his power. His power is entirely sufficient to get me across the street. I, in fact, even believe him when he says that he wants to get me across the street. But I don't think he's telling me the whole truth; though what he's telling me is true. He wants to get me across the street. It's because I don't trust his motive. I think that he wants to get me across the street; he's fully able to do so; he strongly desires to do so; but it is to get me in the alley to grab my wallet. So I fear his power; I believe his expression insofar as it goes; but I don't trust his motive. So I don't believe in him as the source of the fullness of truth consistent with accomplishing the goal he's expressed that he has for me. So I do not have faith in him. I decline his offer.

But now for the last example, suppose a policeman, strong, able-bodied, empowered with the authority of civil society offers to help. I have seen him on this street corner help others across the street and he's always done so effectively. I believe that he is speaking truth when he says he wants to help me across the street. I also believe that he's a

reservoir of sufficient truth that he can analyze the situation and see me safely across the street. He has the power to stop traffic at his whim. His righteousness is sufficient. He'll remain faithful to what he's expressed. But beyond what he's expressed, he has the power to fulfill his expression; he has a reservoir of access to the truth of how traffic works to fulfill his expression. Since all of the components are now present, I believe in him as the source of truth and sufficient truth. I believe in him as a reservoir of sufficient power. I fully trust his motive. Then I say, let's go; because I now have faith in him including his truth, his righteousness, his power, his motivation, and so on.

So I want you to see from that simply physical example that faith in God contains many elements. You may choose to accent different elements; but the point is, it contains but is not quite the same as trusting, believing, fearing, and so on. It has to include God as He is which includes all three of those critical essences to their fullness, you see, as the Holy God that He is. We cannot speak of walking by faith in God unless we understand this aspect of the "in God" part and understand the faith part. We connect them into a phrase that rolls off our tongue of faith in God. But we tend to accent the faith and drop the "in God" as to the fullness of what that means. So let's go back to that phrase, walking by faith and examine it a bit. As Christians we know many things about God. We can't claim partial knowledge about the few things that I'm going to say. We know them from the Bible. We know that God is and we also know a lot about what He is.

Next poster. Going back again to the elementary concepts we spoke of when we were at the Holiness of God. God is the only uncreated thing in all of existence. God is the only self determined thing in all of existence. Everything else has its meaning and value set by God. He has His meaning and value contained within Himself, not set by anything outside of Himself. We know God and His three major essences as we just reviewed. We know our God is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. We know that Jesus, the Son of God, paid the price for all our sins. We know our eternal destiny is guaranteed in His presence on the new Heaven and new Earth in the New Jerusalem. We have faith in all those things, plus others about God. If you do not have faith in those things, then your faith is not in the God of the Bible as he has spoken to us in His Son, and you're probably not a Christian; because to be a Christian would imply that you have faith in those things. So I'm not speaking to anyone who is not a Christian in regard to this faith in God; but for the rest of you who I think do have faith in these things. Next time when I speak, we're going to take at an outcome where we fail to walk by faith and remembering that our tendency is to always think about asking for more faith when it fails and to believe that we've done our part. But next time when I move into the example of a faith failure, we're going to require ourselves to look at the second frame of reference, not only empowered by, but walking in accordance with. And I think what we're going to receive is a revelation from that is 99.9% of the time when we have a faith failure and pray for more faith, it's not more faith that we need; it's because we have refused as an act of the will to walk in accordance with the faith that we, in fact, already have.

But our time is up today. We'll take that up two weeks from today when we come together again.