

WHAT IS FAITH?

(Philippians 3:8-9; Hebrews 11)

Series: "Philippians: The Joyful Letter" (Part 18)

...Salvation is from the Lord from beginning to end, and any good Bible teaching will always point to the Author, the Agent, and the Finisher of our salvation, it is God Himself. God alone is responsible for our salvation, but when this is said, any person may rightly ask, "How, then, does this apply to me?" God offers His righteousness to those who lack it, so what must I do to receive this righteousness? By what means does this salvation become mine?

...The answer to all the questions is that God's righteousness becomes yours personally through faith. (Romans 1:17)

...Since faith is all important as the means of our salvation, we do well to try and understand what it is so that we might be among those blessed to possess the treasure of the Gospel...life eternal.

FOUR QUESTIONS UNFOLDING THE WONDER OF THE FAITH THAT ALONE SAVES US FROM OUR SIN...Faith is the means to receive God's righteousness.

I. What Is The Nature Of Faith? Many people are puzzled about this thing called faith.

- A. Faith is simply belief. If you believe in a thing you have faith in it.
...Faith is one of the most common realities of life. It is far more common than brilliant intellectual ability or artistic insight. These things are true for only a few people but faith is the reality that all people experience. Everyone is a person "Of faith."
- B. False definitions of faith often cloud our thinking. Some false views of faith:
 - 1. Delusional faith: Simply believing something you know is not true. Some teach that there is no such thing as sin, sickness, or pain. This is nonsense.
 - 2. Credulity: the attitude of accepting something as true, simply because it is wished.
 - 3. Subjective faith: This is believing something is true apart from the objective truth of God's Word. This is a faith grounded in one's feelings. (Very common today!)
- C. For us by far the greatest example of faith is the way a man and a woman commit themselves to each other in marriage. "Will you marry me?" Yes! The whole conversation is only 5 words. But between the two people, the words constitute a pledge of faith that will last for a life time.

II. What Is Saving Faith? Is it different from common faith?

- A. Saving faith and common faith compared and contrasted:
 - 1. The nature of both is the same: Faith is believing in something or someone and then acting upon that faith.
 - 2. The difference between the two is the object of the faith. Saving faith is absolutely certain because it is faith in the only One in the universe who is absolutely faithful, and who never breaks His promise. (James 1:17) "God does not change..."
- B. We ask: What does God want from us? God wants to be trusted, He wants to be believed.
 - 1. We believe all kinds of people with our health, money, family, and everyday lives.
 - 2. Why should we not believe God? At the very best, people are only partially reliable, and can be trusted partially. But God is entirely reliable. He is eminently trustworthy.
...He is the only person in the universe whose word is always His bond.

III. What Shall We Believe? What does God call upon us to believe? Two things:

- A. God demands that we admit without reservation that we are sinners, far less perfect than He, and that due to this we should be separated from His presence forever.
...This principle is hard for nonbelievers to embrace, yet we recognize this principle in many things that are accepted naturally. Example: The state requires standards for one to be...
...In the same way, God has a right to His standards that are summed up as perfection.
- B. The second thing God asks us to believe is that He loves us in spite of our sin and that He acted in Jesus Christ to remove that sin and to restore fellowship between Himself and us. (Romans 5:8)
- C. There are two parts to the transaction: Sin must be punished and God offers us righteousness.
...Do you believe this? Do you believe you are a sinner? If you do, He offers His righteousness.

IV. What Are The Steps Of Faith? Beyond the initial moment of saving faith...faith is meant to become strong. It does not start strong, but is meant to become strong. (Abraham...Hebrews 11)

...Come to know God and spend time with Jesus and you will find that your faith will grow in strength. The glory of it is... that the strength of your faith will not lie in you, but in faith's object. It lies with God, the One you are coming increasingly to know as you walk with Him to heaven.

SO WHAT? WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THIS MAKE IN MY LIFE?

- 1. Don't be confused thinking that only a Christian is a person of faith, as if it were something different from reason. Daily every person exercises faith. Everyone. The difference is the object of such faith. The unbeliever simply has placed his or her faith in a failing object. The Christian's faith is in our God, who never changes, is almighty, eternal, and is always faithful.
- 2. The great news is that God gives His righteousness as a gift, a treasure to all who believe upon His Son. You cannot earn it, but God gives it. Eternal life is the gift of God for all..."clothed in the righteousness of Jesus."
- 3. If you have known the Lord for many years your faith should be very strong, and your ability to trust God much stronger than when you first believed. Spending time with Jesus in prayer and Bible study will grow your "faith muscles," and nothing else will. You will come to know even better and more personally the greatness of our God. You will say with Paul, "If God is for us, who could be against us?"
- 4. Come to the Lord Jesus, as you come to Him confess your sins, repent from them, and receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord. The Bible tells us, "That whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Come and receive the gift of His righteousness that permits you entrance into heaven.