

More Faith in Christ
Steve Hogan – May 21, 2023
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We're taking a few weeks to talk about the importance of faith. Now having faith means we're spiritually connected to Jesus Christ, we're plugged into Him, we're trusting Him. - Faith is the means by which we have a relationship with Christ, the means by which we can do what God wants us to do, the means by which we can live the Christian life.

Gal. 5:6 says, "*the only thing that counts is faith operating through love.*" Heb. 11:6 says, "*Without faith it is impossible to please Him.*" 2 Cor. 5:7 says, "*Walk by faith*", which means we're to live our life by faith. Now faith means we're believing God, we're relying on Him, we're depending on Him, and we're not depending on ourselves. Prov. 28:26 - Last week, we saw that one of Jesus' main objectives with His disciples was to help them grow in their faith. And that's what He's doing for us, helping us to grow in our faith. Well, let's find out more what Jesus said about faith.

Luke 5:17-20. There are several things we learn from these vs.

1. These men were desperate for Jesus to heal their friend, so much so that they actually made a hole in the roof and then let down their friend so he was right in front of Jesus. And this took ingenuity, planning, work, and teamwork too, to do this.
2. These men had faith in Jesus – they believed Jesus could heal their friend. And this illustrates the importance of having faith in God for others, of praying to God for the lives of others. Eph. 6:18

3. The power of the Lord was present for Jesus to perform a healing. When we talk about faith, we are talking about our inability and Christ's ability, Christ's power to help us, to strengthen us, to work through us. 2 Cor. 12:9-10
4. Jesus has power to physically heal people - he healed this man of paralysis, and Jesus has power to spiritually heal people - he forgave the sins of this paralyzed man.
5. Jesus could see their faith, and this shows that He is God because He was omniscient. We can't see what's in the hearts of men, but Jesus can, and He saw that they had faith. And Jesus responded to these men's faith - and what He did was miraculous, both the physical healing, and the spiritual healing.

Luke 7:36-50. There's the story of a sinful woman, a prostitute, and she came to Jesus. And she was remorseful, she was repentant, and she wanted to be forgiven. She believed Jesus could forgive her sins, which, as Jesus said, were many. And Jesus said to her, "*Your faith has saved you.*" She wasn't forgiven because of her works, because of what she did, but because of her faith in Jesus. She trusted in Jesus' work for her, and not long after this, He died on the cross to pay for her sins.

Luke 8:40-42, 49-56. A synagogue official had a very sick 12-year-old daughter, and he goes to Jesus, falls at His feet, and begs Him to heal her. But the situation goes from bad to worse, for this girl dies. And God wanted it to happen this way so that it would be all the clearer Jesus healed her, and then Jesus would get a lot more glory. And it's interesting what Jesus says to the synagogue official - *"Do not be afraid any longer; only believe and she will be made better."* Again we see this connection between our lack of faith and fear. If we're fearful, it's often because we have little or no faith.

- So again, there's this emphasis on faith, for Jesus says, *"only believe"* - for that's what you need to do to see God come through for you, to see God do a miracle in your behalf. Well this official had faith in Jesus, for Jesus raises his daughter from the dead.

Luke 17:11-19. There's these ten lepers, and Jesus heals all of them. But only one of them comes back to give glory to God. And so what do we learn from this?

- First, the one who came back and gave thanks to God, who gave glory to God had become a believer, was one who was saved by Jesus and delivered from his sins.
- Second, the one who got saved wasn't a Jew - he was a Samaritan. Again, we see that God wants all people, both Jews and Gentiles to come to Jesus for mercy.
- Third, this person had faith in Jesus, for Jesus said, *"your faith has made you well."* And again, it's our faith in Jesus, it's trusting Him for His grace, mercy, and power.

Luke 18:1-8. There's a widow who needs legal protection and she goes to this judge and keeps begging him for help, and finally he helps her and she gets justice. But look at vs 8 - *"However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?"* What a verse, and how applicable to us in these days, for we live in the end-times, and it won't be long before this age comes to an end, and Christ returns to rapture the church.

Christ's sobering question is very relevant, and it's whether we'll have faith in Him in these last years leading up to His return. Jesus knows that life on earth will get very difficult, and so He's exhorting us to have faith, to trust in Him. And having faith in Him results in you receiving grace, peace, wisdom, and strength, and all that you need to keep living for Him, to keep persevering to the end. So if someone asks you what you need to live for the Lord during these end-times, tell them that they must have faith in God, they must be trusting Him, relying on Him.

Luke 18:9-14. This is about a proud Pharisee and a humble, unrighteous tax collector. And the Pharisee didn't get saved because he was proud, he was trusting in his own righteousness - this Pharisee was self-righteous. But the tax collector got saved because he was humble, he knew he was unrighteous, and he saw his need to be righteous, and knew that only God could make Him righteous, and that he would have to trust God to make Him righteous, which is what he did. Now it does not say he trusted God, but we know he did. Gal. 3:6-9. So it was this man's humility which led to his faith in Jesus which resulted in his salvation.

Mark 11:20-25. Here Jesus is using this story about this dead fig tree to teach His disciples to have faith. And what do we learn?

- First, Jesus says, *“Have faith in God.”* And Jesus is commanding us to have faith in Him, and He does that because He knows it’s vital for our lives as Christians.
- Second, you’re not to doubt, you’re not to question whether Jesus can help you or not.

Third, Jesus says, *“all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them.”* Jesus is telling us that whatever we ask for, whatever we’re praying for, we’re to have faith, we’re to believe He’ll answer us. John 14:12-13. Now the word *believe* in this vs. and the word *faith* in vs. 22 are from the same Greek word. So we see that these words faith and believe mean the same thing.

- Fourth, when you pray, you need to have a forgiving heart towards others who’ve hurt you or wronged you. That is, you need to have a holy heart when you pray - otherwise, God won’t answer your prayers. 1 Tim. 2:8, Psalm 66:16-20

I want to now look at some vss. in John that talk about faith. But in John, the word faith isn’t used very much, but the word believe is used over 50 times.

- John 3:16 - *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but will have eternal life.”* We need to have faith in God to be forgiven, to have eternal life. It’s not by our works, but by trusting in Christ’s work for us - it’s believing that He died on the cross to save us from our sins and from death.
- John 4:41 - *“Many more believed because of His word... we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”* All these Samaritans were getting saved because they believed in Jesus Christ, and believed that He’d save them from their sins.

John 5:24 - *“He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life.”* Now what do we learn? That hearing God’s word, hearing God’s truth is essential for faith. When we talk about faith, we’re talking about believing in God and in what He’s saying. And God says we’re sinners, and that Jesus died on the cross, and we need to believe these things to be saved. John 5:38 - This says that believing God relates to having His word in us. John 6:40, 47

John 5:44. *“How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?”* Jesus is saying we can’t believe, we can’t have faith if we want glory and praise from others. We can only believe if we want God to be glorified, if we want Him to be praised and honored. Jn. 14:13 - *“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”* Ps. 79:9. This is a very important point, that we are praying for ourselves and others we know, with the ultimate objective of our faith, of our prayers is that we want God to be glorified and honored, we want God to be pleased. Heb. 11:6

John 6:5-7. There's a huge crowd of people and they're hungry for food. Now Jesus knew what He was going to do - He knew that He'd feed all these people. But He wanted to test Philip, to see what he would do. And Philip was an analytical, detail person, and was thinking in human terms. And he said 200 denarii worth of bread wouldn't be enough to feed the people, and 200 denarii would be 200 days wages, which was a lot of money.

Now Jesus was testing Philip's faith. He wanted Philip to see the impossibility of the situation, to see that there was no human solution, that only God could solve this problem. And that's just what happens - Jesus does this big miracle.

- James 1:2-3. God tests you and He tests you with trials. Why? So that you get your eyes off yourself and look to Him and trust Him for the help you need. And so always remember that God gives you trials so that your faith grows - so you humble yourself and look to Him, and trust Him for help, for the answer. James 1:9, 12; 1 Thess. 2-3

John 6:27-29. People in the world are focused on working for food that perishes, are focused on making money so they can buy physical things. And it's true that we need to work so we can meet our physical needs. Our problem is when that's all we think about. - Vs. 29 says, "*This is the work of God, to believe in Him whom He has sent.*" God wants us to realize that our ultimate work is working for God, and specifically that we have faith in God. That is, faith in God is our work; having faith in God is what we're to do every day. The work God wants you to do is to believe in Him and in Jesus. We don't usually think that believing in God, that having faith in God, is work, but it is, and its spiritual work.

We think a lot about our physical work, and yes, God has physical work for you to do, but what's most important is seeing that all your work, physical, mental, or spiritual, is spiritual work, is a work of faith, a work of believing. Anything you do, whether it's washing the dishes, working at a job, or praying, is spiritual work, and you need to do it by faith. And so your whole life is to be a life of faith. 2 Cor. 5:7. And living a life of faith is work, it's spiritual work, and is the work God wants you to do every day of your life. Well, there's more to say about faith, and we will look at it more next week. Psalm 52:8