



Faith Series

Faith, It's what We Long For

Titus 1:1-4

Westport Christian Church

March 14, 2010

Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. (Titus 1:1-4NASU)

A small congregation in the foothills of the Great Smokies built a new sanctuary on a piece of land willed to them by a church member. Ten days before the new church was to open, the local building inspector informed the preacher that the parking lot was inadequate for the size of the building. Until the church doubled the size of the parking lot, they would not be able to use the new sanctuary. Unfortunately, the church with its undersized lot had used every inch of their land except for the mountain against which it had been built. In order to build more parking spaces, they would have to move the mountain out of the back yard. It became evident that even with the entire fill needed in front of the church, they had a problem of far too much dirt. In fact it was a mountain where a second and third parking lot should be. The cost of removing this mountain would be prohibitive for the church.

The next Sunday morning Pastor Crawford reminded the congregation of Christ's promise, *"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you"* (Matt. 17:20). Then he added, "If you believe that, come on Wednesday night to pray with me that God will move this mountain in back of our church." The next morning the phone rang. It was the telephone company. They were planning to erect a new building just east of them and they needed fill for a large swampy area. They were asking if they sell them some dirt? Well of course! In about a month the phone company had hauled away 40,000 square yards of our dirt, for which they paid the church \$25,400, and also leveled the ground for the required three parking lots and prepared them for paving.

The Lord makes good on His promises and He knows where to find the answer we need. The little church was dedicated the next Sunday as originally planned and there were far more members with "mountain moving faith"! (A booklet titled, "1943-1973: From Maple Avenue to the Mount." On page 29 is a chapter called "Faith to Move Our Mountain.")

I have to ask, would you have shown up for that prayer meeting? For the next few weeks we are going to take a look at faith. Can we just "claim" to have faith and be in good standing with God? When I go out to call on a child about making a decision of salvation in Christ, I often share with them six steps and use six fingers to help me illustrate. Today, as we look at the basis of faith, it is my desire that we will see how faith fits into God's way of saving man. It is also my desire that when we talk about faith, we will know what it is and what it is not. So, today I want to look at three questions.

I. WHAT IS FAITH?

This is an important question because how we answer it will determine what we will do and will not do for Jesus. If we misunderstand what faith is, then we will misunderstand what God expects from us. For many people, when they think of the word faith, they will think of the word believe. When we think of believing something, many people think that in order to believe in something, all you have to do is acknowledge it. In other words, if I intellectually know something is true, then I believe it.

When we think of the word "faith", we think that "faith" is a little deeper than just believing. Is there more to having faith than acknowledging that something is true? Many times people will go to Hebrews 11:1 for a definition of faith, but in reality Hebrews 11:1 which says "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" is really the RESULTS of faith.

Faith is the conviction or understanding that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the Kingdom of God. We could also say that faith is whole-soul trust in God and His Word because of the sufficiency of the evidence, which leads to doing what God, says. People think that God wants us to take a blind leap of faith to

follow Him. That could be the furthest thing from the truth. When Thomas doubted Jesus' return, Jesus allowed him and the others to examine Him.

Faith is a "trust" built upon sufficient evidence. We see enough evidence for God that we put our trust in Him. Take for example a parachute. Each of us has seen one work, we acknowledge that it will work, but will we use it? If the plane is going down and you know that the parachute is there, will just acknowledging that it will work save you or do you have to do something with your knowledge? Faith involves action!

We can really use the word FAITHFUL instead of faith. Faithful catches the meaning best because it implies action instead of just acknowledgment. In a working definition of faith, you will see that part of the definition deals with doing what God says. In order for the parachute to work, you have to take it, put it on, and then use it properly. Many people leave out the "doing what God tells us to do" out of their definition of faith.

James tells us: *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.* (James 2:19)

You see if it just take acknowledging who Jesus is, who God is then Satan and his demons are saved! So faith takes on action.

Jesus said, *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."* (JOHN 14:15) When we look at the Hebrews hall of Faith in chapter 11 we see that the faith that pleased God was an active faith. *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* (JOHN 3:36) *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."* (Eph 2:10)

So what is faith? An obedient lifestyle built upon the knowledge of God's Word and trust in Christ.

II WHAT IS THE BASIS OF OUR FAITH?

Today it is popular for many to say, I cannot believe in something unless I can see it. Thomas, one of Jesus' disciples struggled with this, *"Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."* John 20:27-29

Most of the things in life that we believe are things that we cannot see. For example, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, electricity, wind, etc.

God's word tells us what we can base our faith on. *For "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And*

how will they hear without a preacher. . . So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Romans 10:13-17)

Notice that Romans tells us that faith comes from hearing the word of Christ. The problem that people run into is that they want to build their faith on other things. Miracles, prosperity, feelings and so on. God gives us something that is objective that we can put our hands on, something that we can go to that is an objective standard. God has laid out His case before us in the Word. One of the things that impressed me and still impresses me is the accuracy found in the Bible. God has preserved the text over the centuries and it does not contradict itself. The Bible does not speak in terms of "once upon a time in a land far, far away"; it speaks of actual places and actual people that can be verified through history.

The Bible names 100's of cities that can be verified through archeology. The Bible contains 66 books that were written over a 1,500-year span, over 40 generations by over 40 authors from every walk of life from peasants to kings, yet it still all fits together. Our faith must be based on the evidence of the Bible. Our faith can also be strengthened by the testimony of others. *Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.* (John 20:30-31)

And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. (Acts 15:7)

If you are waiting for something spectacular to base your faith on, you may be waiting a long time. Our faith must be founded and grounded on God's Word.

III WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF FAITH?

"Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb 10:35-11:1)

The word "assurance" can be used to speak of a titled deed. Faithfulness results in us holding the "title deed" to heaven. This word can also mean that "faithfulness" is the substructure that all of the Christian life involves. If a person misses the supreme importance of the subject of "faithfulness" he has missed the heart of the Christian life-style.

When we live for Jesus, when we are faithful until death, we will receive the crown of life! James 1:12, Revelation 2:10 We will have an inner conviction that what God promises, He will deliver. When we look at our lives in the light of God's revelation in the Word and in Christ, and when we see the changes that God is making in our lives, we are more convinced about the things in His word, which we cannot lay our eyes on. When you look at the rest of Hebrews Eleven, you will see that all of the people mentioned, did what God told them. God allowed them to look back and be convinced that He was not going to let them down. Our faith will lead to obedience. We already talked about this so I am not going to rehash this, but suffice to say, if we love God and if we have a real faith in Jesus, we will live for Him. Jesus said that if you want to follow Him, you have to take up your cross and follow Him daily!

Conclusion; What is faith that saves? It is faithfulness. A true faith will lead to action from us. Our faith is based in the Word of God. Our faith is not a blind faith, but is based on sufficient evidence. If we have faith in Jesus, then we are saying that we accept the truth about Him to the point that it motivates us to do what He says. Faith is the bases for all that we do. Remember, without faithfulness, it is impossible to please God. Fred Craddock, in an address to ministers, caught the practical implications of consecration. "To give my life for Christ appears glorious," he said. "To pour myself out for others . . . to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom -- I'll do it. I'm ready, Lord, to go out in a blaze of glory. "We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table-- 'Here's my life, Lord. I'm giving it all.' But the reality for most of us is that he sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Listen to the neighbor kid's troubles instead of saying, 'Get lost.' Go to a committee meeting. Give a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home. Usually giving our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it's harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul." (Darryl Bell)

Do you have faith? If the answer is yes, then put it into action. If the answer is no, then today you have that opportunity to discover for yourself God's amazing grace and live your life faithfully for Him.

AMEN