

Following Jesus - Part 2: “Faith Is”

Introduction

Good evening to all of you. Welcome to our CEP today, I hope you had your dinner. And now you're ready to feast upon the word of God. This CP running for seven weeks really focused on following Jesus. Here I touch upon very important scriptural realities and principles, and the ironical thing about it is that these are often truths people neglect or do not know about. So I'm so glad you can join us, and to discover these wonderful principles for your spiritual life. And the goal, of course, is that you'll be mature and you may be equipped to be a good follower of Jesus. Now, last week, we looked at a very important subject, about taking up the cross. Following Jesus means that I'm willing to deny myself that I may do the will of God, how important that is.

Today, we're going to look at a second subject and it's a very simple one, actually. But I think we need a lot of encouragement to be clear about what it really is. And that's the subject of faith. I've entitled this to be simply 'Faith is ...', as I want you to think, what is really faith for you. If I were to ask you today to give me a definition of faith, what would it be? Now notice, I'm not asking you about a description of faith. I'm asking you for a definition, because the definition forces you to be very clear and concise about what faith is. So maybe take this time, think a little, you may want to pause this. But think a little about what faith really is. How would you define it? As you're thinking, I want to let you know that this subject is very, very important. How important? Hebrews 11:6 tells us, 'And without faith, it is impossible to please Him.' Notice this, without faith, it is impossible to please Him. So, if you want to live a life that pleases God, you must live a life of faith. And it's hard to live a life of faith, if we're not clear about what faith is. So let me say this, today's session, short one, not long, as usual, will be all about giving you a definition of faith. I hope that as I go through this lesson, you will echo it at home, at workplaces, wherever you may be, say these things out so that perhaps at the end of this session, you will be able to give me and give to others the definition of faith.

Definition of faith:

1. Confidence

Now I give you a simple illustration. This is a picture of a common activity many people do. It's called trust fall. Trust, it's very similar to belief, it's very similar to faith. What is trust fall? Well, someone stands on a higher place. And he or she keeps as straight as he can. And he bends and he falls backwards. He can't see clearly, but he trusts the people under him or her to be able to catch him when he or she falls. Now notice the difficulty is to be absolutely straight. I know people who squat and therefore no count, all right. But the ability to be straight and fall well requires faith. And what is faith. I will tell you, I believe the essence of faith is really confidence. Not just knowing that there's a group of people there. It's not just hearing that there's a people there. It's not just seeing that there is a group of people there but being confident about the people there. That's faith. That's trust. That's belief. It's the same when you go see a doctor, you may see some accolades, you may see his credentials hanging on the wall. But to trust the doctor means you're confident in him and his skills and his ethics, that

you're willing to place your life in his hands, so that when you are anesthetized, and he opens you up and performs a surgery, you will not fear. You're confident in him and his skills. So, number one thing I want to say about the definition of faith is faith is confidence. Now, you say that's such a simple definition. Not yet. I told you it's a whole session of building up a definition. But the very first thing I want you to know faith is confidence. And if I put it simply faith in God is confidence in God, that He will do exactly what he says he will do.

2. Confidence in God's word

Biblical faith is confidence in God's word. So now we are enriching this definition. All right? Faith is confidence in what? In God's Word. Now I get all that mostly from Hebrews 11, a very important chapter of the Bible. It's called the 'Hall of Faith', kind of a play on 'Hall of Fame'. But in chapter 11, we see Paul or we see the author of Hebrews who may not be Paul, the author of Hebrews explaining an illustration illustrating what faith really is. Hebrews 11:7, 'By faith, Noah, being warned by God', so God spoke to Noah, God gave his word to Noah. And that's the basis of Noah's faith. 'By faith, Noah, being warned by God', and again, verse 8, in Hebrews 11, 'By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out'. You notice is the word that is given by God to them, that they acted upon, and that is faith. And then Romans 10:17, 'So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ'. So what is faith? Faith is confidence in God's Word.

Now, I want to ask you, what's the difference between faith and this picture? This picture, you may say, what is this about? This is a picture that describes superstition. You know how it is people believe that if a black cat crosses your path, you have bad luck. Now, many people believe this. In fact, they have confidence in this. But that's not Biblical faith. Why? Because superstition is confidence in man's traditions, in man's conceptions. But faith is confidence in God's word. And with that, you can then understand what's the difference between daydreaming, and faith? Daydreaming is building castles in the air, you very much are confident that what you dream of may come true. But that's not Biblical faith, because daydreaming is built upon your own dreams. It's not built upon God's solid word. And it's the same when it comes to positive thinking. There are people today who actually believe that if they think positive things, that positive things will happen. So, they believe that there is power in their positive thinking, they believe and have such confidence that if they think right, things will be right. That kind of philosophy has even crept into the church. It's called the 'word of faith' movement. Now, it has nothing to do with faith. Let me put it this way. It is all presumption. It's all man's ideas. They are church people. They are church leaders who say if you say to yourself enough that you will get a Ferrari, you will get a Ferrari. No, that's not faith. Because that is confidence in your own ideas. But Biblical faith is confidence in God's word. So you must be clear, to live by faith is not to live by positive thinking, or to live by your dreams, or to live by man's superstition. Faithful living, a life of faith is confidence, based on the confidence in God's Word, the Bible.

3. Confidence in God's word regardless of circumstances and consequences

Now, is that all? No there is something else. All right, faith is confidence in God's word, regardless of circumstances and consequences. Now that's very important to grasp to. You see, when Noah was building the ark, he did not base that decision on circumstances. Because there is no rain. There is no flood. There is no need for a big ark. It's ridiculous if you look at the circumstances, but faith is confidence in God's word, regardless of circumstances and consequences. Now, when Abraham was called out to go and when Abraham was promised to be the father of many nations, he was not having a child. His wife was barren. But you see, Abraham obeyed and trusted God regardless of circumstances, and he went out. You recall, Moses, Moses refused to be called the prince of Egypt, the pharaoh of Egypt, because he was not acting based on circumstances. He was not looking at the richest of Egypt and say, That's my life. He's saying, No, God tells me to go to lead the people of Israel out. And while that looks real tough compared to the luxurious life, I may live here in Egypt, I have confidence in God and His word and he went to lead Israel out of Egypt. And Hebrews 11 tells us that faith is difficult, in that you may have to 'suffer, mocking and flogging, chains and imprisonment, some were stoned and some were sawn in two. They were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated.' (Hebrews 11:36-37). Now, when you live by faith, you may have to suffer consequences. These guys suffer consequences. But faith is confidence in God's word, regardless of circumstances and consequences. He said, why would they be willing to do this? Because by faith, they saw something more than circumstances and consequences. Verse 10, tells us Abraham did what he did, because 'he was looking forward to the city that has foundations', he saw something no one else saw. Hebrews 11:13 tells us 'These all died in faith not having received the things promised. But having seen them and greeted them from afar'. They saw something that people who have no faith can't see. People who have no biblical faith can only see their circumstance. But people who have faith, see something else, because they have confidence in God's word. Likewise for Moses, he looked to the reward.

So A.W.Tozer tells us 'Faith is seeing the invisible, but not the non-existent'. There's a difference there. We know that we still can't see the heavenly city, we can't see the rewards that God has prepared for those who love Him and serve Him, but they are not non-existent. And faith is confidence in God's word, promising these things. And therefore, we will follow him regardless of circumstances and consequences. Can you follow me and repeat this? Faith is confidence in God's word, regardless of circumstances and consequences.

4. Confidence in God's word regardless of circumstances and consequences that results in obedience to God

Is that all? No, one final component. All right, that's all there is. Faith is confidence in God's word, regardless of circumstances and consequences, finally, that results in obedience to God, I think this is so important to grasp as well. Because faith is not just a feeling. Faith is not just some thought you have. Real faith is confidence, regardless, that will result in practical obedience to God. Jim Elliot, he says, 'To believe, is to act as though a thing were so. Mere saying a thing is so is no proof of my believing it'. If you really believe God, you will obey. And then Martin Luther, he says, 'The true, living faith, which the Holy Spirit instills into the heart, simply cannot be idle'. What a great thought, if you really believe, you will obey.

So that's what is proven by the patriarchs by the fathers of the faith. 'Noah, when he was warned by God', He had faith and what'd he do? 'He constructed an ark'. He did not say, oh, I believe God will send a judgement but I'm doing nothing about it. No, he went about constructing an ark probably for 120 years, in the midst of all the ridicule and mockery by the people around him. But his faith is seen in a practical outworking of this difficult construction. When Abraham obeyed God, that was the proof of his faith. We see Abraham's faith, not with his words, but with his works. He obeyed God and went out. And similarly in verse 17, 'By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac'. That was faith, according to the Hebrews author, according to God, and likewise, it was Moses, who left Egypt. How do you know he believes God? How do you know he believes God's word? This is it. He had confidence in God and His Word, resulting in obedience to Him.

So, does this lady trust her team? (Referring to the illustration of trust fall) I know she does. How do you know that? By her obedience, by her action, by her act, how she laid there so straight. She had confidence that the people will carry her through.

So, faith is so important. 'Without faith, it is impossible to please God.' (Hebrews 11:6) And Hebrews 11:2 tells us "For by it, the people of old received their commendation.' What is God pleased with? Faith. Verse 5, 'By faith, Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, because God had taken him. And he was commended as having pleased God'. I trust you want to live a life that pleases God, because you know, God has given His Son for you. I hope today, this definition will be burned into your heart. But remember, while it's important to be very clear about what faith is, it is also very important to obey. So, I pray that this will not just be an academic session for you. But with this clarity, I pray that the Holy Spirit will enable you to love His word, grow in His Word, study His Word, and then obey His Word, and you will live a life that is pleasing to God, you will live a life that really looks like following Jesus. So may God bless us with faith with this confidence in His Word, regardless of circumstances and consequences that will result in a daily obedience to Him. May God bless you.

Prayer

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this time. Bless my brothers and sisters in Christ as they desire to go deep in your word to follow Jesus well, and may this session be super practical. Maybe some of us are struggling with decisions and wrestling with sin. I pray, we will move beyond the mere intellectual and live also in the practical. May we have this confidence in you and your word, that we will obey you right away. Thank you. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, do join me in the Q & A session on Zoom right after this. Look forward to hearing your questions and serving you there. God bless.