

Lesson 7: The Role of Faith in Spiritual Growth

"Little faith will bring your soul to heaven; great faith will bring heaven to your soul."

C.H. Spurgeon

Introduction

Faith is the foundation of the Christian life; its importance cannot be overstated. Faith determines our actions. We act on what we believe. Faith is everything in spiritual growth.

In Depth Study

I. What is faith?

Hebrews 11.1 "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

- Complete trust in the ability of God
- Forsaking all I trust in Him
- Believing God and accepting His invitation

Fundamental faith

Hebrew 11.6 "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

- Believing in the existence of God - He is.
- Believing in the character of God - He rewards.
- Faith depends upon one thing – your understanding of the nature of God

II. Why is faith important?

- Grace is God's ability. Faith is man's responsibility.
- Faith receives what God provides. Faith is the medium of exchange in the Kingdom of God.
- Faith is bridge between you and God.

- We are justified by faith.

Rom.5.1-2 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

- We are sanctified by faith

Ephesians 3.17 "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love..."

- Our prayers are answered by faith

Mark 11.24 "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

-We overcome the world by faith

1John.5.4 “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”

- Unbelief is a terrible sin. The lack of faith is not weakness it is wickedness.
1John.5.10 “Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.”

III. The object of our faith is God...Know Him

- Our faith must be in God.
John 14.1 “Jesus said, Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.”
Mark 11.22 “Have faith in God.”
- Faith in faith is nothing, faith in prayer is not enough, faith in leaders or church is not what God wants.
- Even the smallest of faith in God is better than no faith at all.

IV. The origin of our faith is the word of God...Hear Him

- If you expect your prayers to be answered, you should pray in the will of God. To know the will of God, you should hear the Word.
Romans 10.17 “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”

Word = Rhema = Specific revelation

Logos = General revelation

Written word – Bible

Spoken word –

Living Word – Jesus

- We should have a relationship with the Living Word through the Written Word. Then it will speak to you.
John 1.14 “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory...”
- To build up faith, fill your life with Logos. If you know the Logos, you can hear the Rhema.
John15.7 “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. If you continue to abide in my word ...”
- Rhema is a specific word to a specific person in a specific period of time .
- Why don't the promises always work? This is because you cannot automatically claim a promise that has been given to everyone in the Bible .
- Mathew 14.22-33
Jesus said Peter come. This was Rhema to Peter. When we trust Him God will speak to our situations. Jesus' word calmed Peter. It could have calmed the sea, but it calmed Peter. It was a specific word to Peter.
The 3 Things Peter did were:

- He received a word from the Lord
- He walked on the word.
- He walked by faith.

- How you receive a Rhema from God?
You do not just go to the Bible and pick out a promise at random. You have to listen for God to speak. The Rhema will come in variety of ways.
 1. Begin by confessing any known sin.
 2. Declare your desire for God's will.
 3. Ask God to lead your desires.
 4. Lay your desires before the Scripture and check if they contradict the Scripture.

V. The characteristics of faith

In Hebrews 11, we see the heroes of faith from Abel to Samuel. We will specifically take a look at the lives of 2 prominent characters from this list to understand what it means to live by faith.

What are the elements included in walking by faith?

Hebrew 11.8-16 eg: **Abraham**

1. Faith includes willingness to obey. (v.8)

- A life of faith begins with the willingness to hear the call of God to leave the place and life of sin. By faith, Abraham obeyed. It was not Abraham's plan to leave Ur. God told him, he obeyed, he left.
- True faith always leads to decisive action. Abraham left his family, friends and old way of life. When Abraham obeyed, God gave him whatever he needed.
- Guidance: Divine Favor, God's provision and grace
Covenant: Promise of eternal life

2. Faith includes willingness to wait. (vs.9,10)

- A life of faith did not end for Abraham when he left Ur or set his foot in the promised land. When he arrived in the promised land, he lived like an alien, a stranger, dwelling in tents.
- Remember, no matter what you have here on earth, this is not your permanent home. Abraham's goal was his permanent home whose architect and builder is God.
- Waiting is one of the greatest disciplines. Waiting time is not wasted time. Abraham waited patiently for twenty five long years for the fulfillment of the promise.
- What God is doing while you are wait?
 - God may be testing you how committed you are.

- God is working behind the scene preparing a way.
- God is preparing us to accomplish His vision in our lives.

- God's timing is always right. True faith is waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises in God's timing.

- What does waiting mean?
 - Dependency on God.
Psalms 63.1 "O God, you my God earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water."
 - Listening to God.
 - Seeking the Lord.

3. Faith includes willingness to sacrifice. (vs. 17,18)

- The ultimate proof of faith is willingness to sacrifice.
Abraham was willing to give the most important thing in his life - his son.
- God will never settle for the second place in your life.
- Two important things we see in Abraham's life are the tent and the altar.
 - By living in the tent, they confessed their attitude toward the world; they would not let its attractions blind them to spiritual realities. They were strangers - unwilling to accept short-term satisfaction that would deny them long-term fulfillment.
 - With the altar, they confessed their relationships to the Lord. The altar signifies Obedience/ accepting the will of God. It is where God meets His people.

- After walking with God and being known as the friend of God, Abraham learned to trust God's character. Abraham learnt:
 - God always does the right thing even if it takes a long time. Delays are not denials.
 - God always does the right thing even if what He says seems unreasonable.
 - God always does the right thing even if we question Him.
 - God always does right thing even if we do not understand.

4. Faith includes courage. (v.23)

eg. **Moses**

- Courage is the opposite of fear.
Faith overcomes all fear, anxiety, worries, even the fear of death. Once we were the slaves of the fear of death. (Hebrews 2.14,15)
- Fear will make you ineffective. Fear will kill your potential
- Faith will see the invisible. Faith will do the impossible

5. Faith includes choices (v.24)

- God created man with free will. Freedom is a gift of God.

- Moses had two choices—moral and spiritual.

The moral choice was the pleasure of sin versus suffering for Christ.

The spiritual choice was to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter or as a reproach for Christ's sake.

- Your choices determines who you are.

Deuteronomy 30.19, 20 "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

- Egs: Abraham versus Lot (Genesis 13)
Samson and Delilah (Judges 16)
Jesus or Barabbas (Mathew 27.17)
Jesus (Hebrews 12.2)
- We cannot serve two masters at the same time. Either you can be with the children of God or with Egypt. Say yes to spiritual things.
Moses' dilemma was to reject the royal position, to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter (obligated to her) or to reject his people. Moses said no to positions, power and possessions.

6. Faith includes commitment. (v.28)

- commitment to God
- commitment to His word
- commitment to His work
- commitment to His Commandments
- commitment is more important than talent.
- consistency is more important than money.
- character is more important than skills.
- faithfulness is more important than fame.

7. Faith includes conflicts seemingly never resolved. (v.37,38,39)

- There are some questions that may never be answered but God knows what He is doing. We will know some answers only when we reach heaven.
- We are not walking by sight but by faith. We are not living by explanations but by the promises of God.
- What did the heroes of faith obtain by faith?
 - A most honorable character and commendation from God "the world was not worthy for them."
 - They obtained good report. (eg: Job, Paul)

After obeying God and walking with Him, Moses learnt:

- God's purpose is more important than popularity.
Moses lived to please God.
- People are more valuable than pleasure.

Moses could have had all the comforts at the expense of his people.

- God's peace is more valuable than possessions.
All the Egyptian treasures did not give Moses peace.
- God's passion is more valuable than worldly power.
Moses liked the wilderness more than the palace because there he saw the Living God.

Application

Grow your faith by:

- *Hearing the Word of God*
- *Knowing the Word of God*
- *Doing the Word of God*
- *Sharing the Word of God*

Discussion

Are you walking by faith?

- Where is fear or comfort keeping you from trusting God and exercising your faith?
- What is one risk you can take in your life that will help your faith grow? (eg: stand up for a value you believe in during a tough conversation, take on a challenge that will stretch you etc)
- In what aspect of your life is waiting on God most difficult right now?
- If you had faith that your God is a big God and you could ask Him to do any one thing in your life, what would it be?