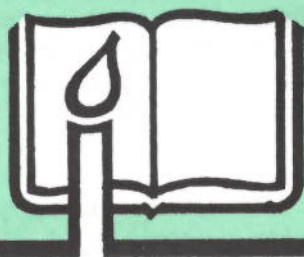


STUDIES IN THE BIBLE



Saving Faith

Lesson 21

The importance of faith to the seeker of God is concisely stated by the Hebrew writer, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God **must** believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6.) We are told that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1.) To illustrate, no man has ever seen the glories of heaven, and yet by faith we are sure that there is such a place and hope that after death we will enjoy its blessings.



In one sense our whole lives rest upon some kind of faith. For example, the farmer who plants his crops in the spring is confident that in a few months he will reap a harvest. He plants by faith, not being able to prove that flood or frost will not destroy his efforts. Yet because of experience he believes that his labors will shortly be rewarded. So whether one believes in God or not he cannot live without some kind of faith in something.

In the Greek New Testament "faith" and "believe" have the same root. Although we may place a different English meaning on these words today, they have the same meaning in the New Testament. Thus, if one believes in God he has faith in God and vice versa. Moreover, Paul states that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17.) No man can have faith in Christ unless he has first heard God's word by reading the Bible himself or by having its truths related to him by another.

Degrees of Faith

There are degrees of faith. Jesus rebuked His disciples, "O ye of **little** faith." (Matt. 8:26.) On the other hand He commended a Canaanite woman. "O woman, **great** is thy faith." (Matt. 15:28.) To a centurion asking that his servant be healed Jesus said, "I have not found so **great** faith, no, not in Israel." (Matt 8:10.) Paul mentions a faith that can remove mountains (1 Cor. 13:2), a faith so great that we do not possess it today.

We should ask ourselves if our faith is great enough to be **saving faith**. Faith in Christ is necessary for salvation since Jesus declares, "He that believeth **not** shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) But not any kind of faith will bring salvation from sin. There were some who heard Jesus teach, believed in Him, and yet rejected Him. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many **believed** on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." (John 12:42.) Now Jesus

teaches “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 10:32,33.) Those, who like the Jewish rulers have a measure of faith in Christ but will not confess Him, will be denied by Him in the judgment. Such faith is not saving.

Saving Faith

What, then, is saving faith? It is **not** that kind possessed by Satan and his co-workers of whom it is said, “The devils also believe, and tremble.” (James 2:19.) Since none will contend that the devils will be saved even though they believe we may ask, “What is lacking in their faith?” The answer is **trust and obedience**. The faith of the devils is limited to factual acceptance of Christ. **They believe Christ, but do not believe IN Him**. They acknowledge His power, but will neither trust nor obey Him. Their faith is one of mind, not of heart. The faith that saves is the faith that trusts, the faith that obeys.

The truthfulness of this fact is asserted by Paul who in Romans 16:26 speaks of “**the obedience of faith**”. A faith that will not obey will not save. Hebrews 11 has been called the faith chapter of the Bible because it relates many things which were accomplished by faith. We notice that the people described always obeyed God’s commands. Thus “Abel offered...”, Noah prepared...”, and “Abraham obeyed...” These great heroes of faith **did** something to demonstrate their faith. That something was to obey the divine commands. They did what God told them to do without stopping to ask **why**. The man with saving faith will obey God without question.

Blessings Resulting from Faith

The blessings of forgiveness of sins and eternal life are received only when faith is demonstrated in obedience. Many Biblical examples illustrate this principle. Naaman, captain of the Syrian army (2 Kings 5), was told by Elisha that his leprosy would be removed if he dipped himself seven times in the River Jordan. At first Naaman did not believe the prophet. When he did finally believe, however, he dipped himself seven times and his leprosy was cured. Notice – God did not cure Naaman the moment he changed his mind and believed. Rather He took away his leprosy when he demonstrated his faith by obedience. **Naaman’s cure did not precede but resulted from his obedience.**

Man is afflicted with the spiritual disease of sin which will cause us to be lost forever. God will cure that disease – save us from **sin** – **if** we believe in Him, but He will not forgive us **until** we have shown our faith by obeying His commands. **Man is not saved from sin the moment he believes in Christ. He is saved only when that faith causes him to obey and not before.**

As proof of this fact we read, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:26, 27.) Paul shows that faith leads us to obey Christ in baptism. Baptism in turn puts us **into** Christ. It is only when we have gotten **into** Christ by being baptized that we may be said to be saved by faith.

To illustrate, the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30.) They replied, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (Acts 16:31.) That this belief included more than mental acceptance of Jesus is shown in the further statement, “And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately...**having believed in God.**” (Acts 16:33,34 – A.S.V.) His faith, then,

included repentance (as shown in his washing their stripes) and baptism. Had he not repented and been baptized it could not be said that his faith was saving. God forgave his sins only when he showed that faith by repentance and baptism.

Thus saving faith involves implicit trust in the Lord and full obedience to His commands. In our next lesson we will study the scriptural teaching regarding one of these commands, that of baptism.

“Seek and Ye Shall Find”

Write true or false before each statement:

- 1. In Hebrews 11:1 faith is defined as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
- 2. In the Greek “faith” and “believe” have different root meanings.
- 3. Romans 10:17 says “faith comes by direct revelation from heaven.”
- 4. Christ never told His disciples that they had little faith.
- 5. Some of the chief rulers of the Jews believed in Christ, but did not confess him.
- 6. It does not make any difference whether we confess Christ.
- 7. The devils do not believe.
- 8. Naaman was cured of his leprosy as soon as he believed, but before he dipped seven times in the River Jordan.
- 9. Christ will save a man who believes but refuses to obey His commands.
- 10. God forgives the sinner when he has shown his faith by obeying His commands, but not before.

Read Hebrews 11. Circle the letter representing the correct answer:

- a b c 1. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than: (a) Abraham; (b) Cain; (c) Enoch.
- a b c 2. By faith an ark was prepared for the saving of his house by: (a) Jonah; (b) Elijah; (c) Noah.
- a b c 3. The man who by faith refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter was (a) Moses; (b) Abraham; (c) Isaac.
- a b c 4. The one who by faith was translated that he should not see death was (a) Noah; (b) Jacob; (c) Enoch.
- a b c 5. By faith Isaac was offered up to God by his father: (a) Jacob; (b) Abraham; (c) Moses.
- a b c 6. The man who by faith blessed the sons of Joseph when he was dying was: (a) Jacob; (b) Isaac; (c) Abraham.
- a b c 7. By faith there fell down the walls of: (a) Jerusalem; (b) Jericho; (c) Bethlehem.
- a b c 8. The woman who did not perish because by faith she had received the spies was (a) Rebecca; (b) Rachel; (c) Rahab.

In the blanks write the name of the one of whom or to whom Christ was speaking when He made each statement:

- 1. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Matt. 8:25, 26.
- 2. "O woman, great is thy faith." Matt. 15:22-28.
- 3. "How much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Luke 12:22-28.
- 4. "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Matt. 8:5-10.
- 5. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Matt. 14:29-31.
- 6. "According to your faith be it unto you." Matt. 9:27-29.
- 7. "O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?" Matt. 16:5-8.

Student may write here any comment, question, or request.

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Name..... Grade.....

Address..... Date.....

City..... By.....