

WHERE FAITH BEGINS

ROMANS 10:17

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¹⁷ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Introduction:

A pastor by the name of E. F. Hollock, who pastored First Baptist Church of Norman, OK., was preaching a meeting several years ago. The theme of the meeting was prayer. During the meeting he made this statement, "If I had to choose between reading the Bible and praying, I would choose to read the Bible, for its more important for me to hear what God is saying, than for God to hear what I as saying."

The practice of prayer was never intended to be separated from the practice of searching the scriptures.

Notice what the Lord said:

John 15:7

⁷ If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Effective prayer rests on the authority of God's will as revealed through His Word.

Now when it comes to prayer the most difficult part of prayer is not asking but rather believing. It's difficult to be fully convinced about something we cannot see or know for certain.

That's why it is so important for us to recognize and understand what is really true, what we can actually believe.

Faith is much more than "hoping hard."

So what is faith?

Hebrews 11:1

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Effective prayer is impossible without genuine faith. So it is important that we rightly understand what faith is.

Notice:

1. THE FALLACIES OF FAITH

The word substance means "*assurance*", further "faith in the substance of things '*hoped*' for."

But not everything we hope for is God's will for us.

Faith is the assurance God gives us when our desires (or hopes).

Faith is the assurance God gives us when our desires for (and hopes) are in concert with His will.

How does such assurance come? It comes as God speaks by His Spirit through His Word.

Illustration:

We see an illustration of this in John 5

This man in this story wasn't able to walk.

He had been crippled for 38 years.

Do you think he had ever tried to walk? Certainly, how else would he have known that he couldn't walk?

Do you think that he had a desire to walk? Again the answer is yes; why else would he have made so many attempts to enter the pool of Bethesda at the right moment?

No doubt there were people that said to him if you want to walk just get up and walk, but that obviously was impossible.

But this is exactly what the Lord did. The Lord said,

John 5:8-9

⁸ Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. ⁹ And

immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

At that very moment this man was assured that his desire was a reality waiting to be claimed, he stood up and walked.

What was the basis of this man's faith? It was the word of the Lord.

Romans 10:17

¹⁷ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

A. Faith Is Not a Blind Leap

Faith is never a leap into the dark; it is always based upon the firmest of foundations, The Word of God. The person who really walks in faith never walks through life blind.

B. Faith Is Not a Blank Check

The "Name it and claim it" philosophy that permeates much of the church in our day is not faith but rather borders on foolishness.

People have been taught that if they want something from God, then they are to pray about it and believe it than look for it to happen.

Faith is not a blank check! God is not our little genie in a lamp just waiting for us to wish and then give us our wish or anything and everything we desire.

May I remind you that this Charismatic, Name and Claim it crowd have missed the mark! God's is about far larger and greater things than just waiting for me to come up with a new want for my wish list.

C. Faith Is Not a Bad Choice

There are those who would say that it is foolish to walk in total and utter dependence upon the Lord. These people argue that God is an unknown.

That He is an unseen force with which man cannot interact and have fellowship.

They call the Christian who lives by faith a fool!

However, the Christian who determines to truly live his life by total faith in his Heavenly Father will never be disappointed with God, nor will he struggle through life blindly.

2. THE FACTS SURROUNDING FAITH

Again what is Faith? Faith is acting on the revealed Will of God.

Hebrews 11:1-2

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ²For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Notice:

(Read Hebrews 11:3-40)

- Creation (vs. 3)

Hebrews 11:3

³Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

The Creation account is reliable because it is based upon the Word of God.

- Abel (vs. 4)

Hebrews 11:4

⁴By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Abel offered a more pleasing sacrifice because of faith in a promise.

- Enoch (vs. 5-6)

Hebrews 11:5

⁵ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Enoch was translated because he had faith in the promises of God.

- Noah (vs. 7)

Hebrews 11:7

⁷ By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Noah built the Ark and survived the flood because his faith in the Words, and Warning of God.

- Abraham (vs. 8-19)

Hebrews 11:8-19

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. ⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: ¹⁰ For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God. ¹¹ Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore sprang there even of one, and

him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ¹⁵ And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, ¹⁸ Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: ¹⁹ Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham left home and country, sojourned in a foreign land, offered his son as a sacrifice to God and looked for an eternal city, based on the Word of God.

- Moses (vs. 23-29)

Hebrews 11:23-29

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; ²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; ²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. ²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. ²⁹ By faith they passed through

the Red sea as by dry *land*: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

Moses forsook Egypt, led Israel, and did the will of the Lord, all in response to the Word and promises of God.

- Israel (vs. 30)

Hebrews 11:30

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

Israel conquered Jericho because of faith in the Word of God.

Again what is Faith? Faith is acting on the revealed Will of God.

Anything based on guesswork, peace of heart, wishful thinking ECT, will end in failure. God is a God who responds to a people's faith in Himself and His Word.

Illustration:

If you climbed up on top of this building and said, "I am going to jump off of here and not hit the ground. I believe that God is going to make me fly. I have prayed for it and asked Him to hold me up. I have peace in my heart that He will make me fly. I believe that this is His will, so I am going to leap off this building and He will make me fly." Before you jump, please tell us what to

do with the body, because you are probably going to die!

We can pray about anything we want to, and we can hope that it will come to pass, but we can only have faith in those things which God has already promised to bring to pass. When I expect God to do as He has promised, that is faith. When I expect Him to do as I wish, then that is presumption! God will honor the first and ignore the second!

Illustration:

There is a difference in prayers of hope and prayers of faith.

Notice:

When I pray that my neighbor will be saved, I can have faith that God will save him, if he will turn to Jesus. However, I can only hope that he will be saved, because he may decide not to receive Christ.

When I pray that a person will be healed, I can hope that it will happen. I know God has the power to heal, but I do not know that it is His will. I do not have His promise in the matter.

When I pray for the safety of my children, I can hope they will be safe, but I cannot have the absolute

assurance that they will be safe, because I do not have the Lord's Word on it!

Again faith is acting on the revealed Will of God.

3. THE FUNCTION OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:1

¹ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The word evidence means "conviction".

A belief is something you hold onto a conviction is something that holds you.

Every aspect of our lives should operate by an exercise of faith:

- We are saved by faith – (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

- We live by faith – (Galatians 2:20)

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

- We walk by faith – (2 Corinthians 5:7)

2 Corinthians 5:7

⁷ (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

- We stand by faith – (1 Corinthians 16:13)

1 Corinthians 16:13

¹³ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

- We overcome obstacles by faith – (Matthew 17:20)

Matthew 17:20

²⁰ And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, 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.

- We fight by faith – (1 Timothy 6:12)

1 Timothy 6:12

¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

- We achieve victory by faith – (1 John 5:4)

1 John 5:4

⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

Close:

If our prayer life is going to be as it should be we must have faith and faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.