

Lesson # 9 -- The Warning Regarding Faith

Introduction

- A. We have been reminded, in our study of this subject, that faith is an intimate part of our relationship with God. When we were born again we were given the gift of faith -- an ability to trust God.
- B. We have also learned that faith is the way we are to practice the truth. To obey God is simply choosing to do His will with the constant dependence of trust in Him.
- C. Because faith is so important we are given a number of warnings in the Scripture to make sure that we understand from both the negative as well as the positive side -- what faith means.

I. The Biblical Instruction

- A. The warning regarding pride -- hindering our faith.

For John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not. But the publicans and the harlots believed him, and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. Matthew 21:32

Comment: The Jewish people were given many privileges. Chief among these was divine revelation which culminated in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was sent to announce Him. Many believed in John's word, even the publicans and harlots. Most of the religious leaders refused to believe -- because of pride. They did not want to be associated with low class people and they did not want to change their belief and way of life. Is this why we do not believe? Is it our pride?

- B. The warning regarding fear -- hindering our faith.

And there arose a great storm . . . He was asleep . . . they awake Him . . . He arose and rebuked the wind . . . and he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith. Mark 4:37-41

Comment: When we, like the disciples, fail to put faith into action, and accept fear, we are in trouble. Fear and faith are incompatible. We must learn to reject fear and choose to practice the truth by decision. The presence of fear does not mean we are failing -- as long as we do not put our fear (often only an emotion) into practice.

C. The warning regarding laziness --hindering our faith.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? Luke 24:25

Comment: Since faith is based on accepting and practicing the truths presented to us in the Scripture, it is important to know the Word of God. These disciples must have known many Old Testament passages which would help them to understand the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. These men manifested what is so common with each of us -- a way of relating to truth without anything like an aggressive decision to practice the Word. We are spiritually lazy!

D. The warning regarding wrong values -- hindering our faith.

How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? John 5:44

Comment: Genuine faith is based on the Bible. When we have other reasons that dictate whether we believe or not -- we are acting out of harmony with the truth. In this passage the Lord Jesus is criticizing the people of His day for not believing in Him -- because it was not popular nor acceptable with the religious leaders. They valued the approval of these leaders so highly that it led them to reject the Lord Jesus and disobey the Bible.

E. The warning regarding unconfessed sin -- hindering our faith.

Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned . . . Holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith having made shipwrecked. I Timothy 1:5,19

Comment: The Word of God, when accepted and practiced, will lead a person ever deeper into love and faith in God. When there is a lack of submission to the Bible then faith is immediately hindered. It is sad but true that many Christians live this way for many years. We must not allow ourselves to live with unconfessed sin in our lives nor to live out of harmony with the Scripture. We pay a terrible price when we do -- a price that can never be regained.

Summary: As we look back on these warnings we are reminded of that important passage in Hebrews 11:6.

But without faith it is impossible to please him

Comment: Would you change your attitude and actions if a member of your family asked you to? Of course! Here God is asking us to trust Him!

II. The Biblical Illustration

Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.
Mark 16:14

Comment: The disciples were in hiding because of the events related to the Crucifixion and the shock of that event. At this time they had received at least two accounts of the Resurrection (Vs 9-11 and 12,13) but had not believed. The Lord Jesus appeared to them, rebuked them for their unbelief, and refusal to believe (hardness of heart) those who had come to tell them of His Resurrection. This passage points out the cause of much of our unbelief. It is due to a "refusal to believe," "hardness of heart." The Disciples could have investigated -- but they didn't. It would seem they had simply dismissed the evidence. We can think of many things they could and should have done, however, these very same things are what we do not do, when we are in a crises and choose not to believe.

III. The Biblical Explanation

A. The rationale behind this explanation.

Throughout these lessons we have been reminded from the Bible that faith is the way we are to accept and practice the truth. This intimate relationship of faith to truth is not only a great encouragement to us -- it points out a solemn responsibility. To be right with God, to please Him, and to make progress in the Christian life we must do more than read and hear the Scripture. We must learn how to respond to God, by faith, through the truth of His Word. Therefore, I wish to include in this lesson some of the warnings that are given regarding failure to rightly respond to His Word.

B. A sample from the book of Hebrews.

1. The warning regarding neglect.

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, let at at time we let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels (the Old Testament) was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation (message), which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? Hebrews 2:1-3

Comment: Such neglect is the choice of unbelief. This book was written to those who had received testimony from the Apostles and Early Church. The Word of God, because it is spoken by the God of Truth, is final authority and must be accepted as such. Our neglect of such obedience is a terrible sin.

2. The warning regarding hardness of heart.

Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years . . . So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Hebrews 3:7-9,19

Comment: This passage is an inspired commentary on that incident recorded in Numbers 13,14 when the Jewish people refused to believe the promise God had given them generations before. By their unbelief they lost the opportunity to enter the land of Canaan. These verses remind us again that faith or unbelief has to do with a person's "heart." Failure to believe an honest man is a serious matter, but failure to believe God -- Who is infinite in truth and faithfulness -- is a sin beyond comprehension!

3. The warning regarding spiritual lethargy.

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them (those who did not enter Canaan), but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Hebrews 4:1,2

Comment: In these verses we are shown what unbelief does not do -- it does not mix the Word of God with faith. This should be an important lesson to us. This is an explanation as to why the great promises of the Bible do not come true in our lives. We must learn to choose (make a decision of faith) to believe God and then put the Word of God into practice (with the attitude of trusting God). As the passage states, we must be afraid lest we do not do this.

4. The warning regarding refusing to listen to God.

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh Hebrews 12:25

Comment: This statement is a summary of all the warnings in the book of Hebrews. All of us have a tendency not to listen to God or respond to Him through His Word. We may not allow ourselves to live this way. We must learn how to make the right decisions of faith each day and then carefully follow through by way of obedience. This is not to imply that Christianity is a set of rules -- far from it -- but it is a personal relationship with God, and that puts a premium on faith and love.

Summary: This sample from the book of Hebrews illustrates the Biblical relationship that exists between faith and truth. The Word of God is our final authority and we must learn to do more than confess that truth with our lips. God expects us to believe Him -- mix the Word with faith -- and obey Him in trust. When we do so, then God can get involved in our daily life with His power and grace.

IV. The Biblical Application

A. Our tragic problem -- a low level of expectation.

We simply do not believe God -- as we should. Each of us has this tragic problem of not really expecting God to keep His Word. Nothing could be more serious or more disastrous in the life of the Christian. We must admit our sin to one another and confess it to God. We must also train ourselves not to live this way.

What has happened to us to get us to allow for such a sad state of affairs? Perhaps it is the way we interpret the person and Word of God. We have given too much authority to some of the following elements.

1. Our emotions.
2. Our past failures.
3. Our lack of self-worth.
4. Our lethargy and passivity.
5. Our tendency to be self-centered.

B. The Biblical solution:

1. We must confess our low level of expectation as the sin that it is and forsake it.
2. We must develop a plan so that we learn to make the right decisions of faith each day -- in spite of how we feel and in spite of our circumstances.
3. A good way to begin is to use the Daily Affirmation, (Page 39 of this series), on a daily basis until we learn to pray with expectation. (Remember: the question is NOT AND IS NEVER -- will He answer?)

Conclusion: Let's pray for one another that each of us will learn how to live our daily lives in Biblical faith.