

Lesson # 5 -- The Biblical Exhortations Regarding Faith.

Introduction

A. The Bible reminds us of the necessity of faith.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him . . . . Hebrews 11:6

B. It is a comfort to recognize, that what God demands of us -- He provides for us in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. He has given us the gift of faith in our salvation (Eph. 2:8,9).

C. Summary: Principles regarding faith.

1. Faith is an ability, similar to a function, and therefore must be used or practiced to produce benefit. (Luke 17:5-10; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 11:4-40)
2. Faith is essentially a decision. It is a choice and the action initiated by that choice to put the Scripture into practice with trust and love in God. (Numbers 14:11; Acts 16:31; Rom. 4:17-21; Heb. 11:24-29)
3. Faith is not a feeling. Feelings of trust, dependence or joy may accompany faith but these are a result of the decision and not its cause nor even its basic characteristic. Adverse feelings, such as doubt or discouragement do not hinder or limit a genuine decision of faith -- unless they are accepted and put into practice. Such feelings must be rejected as false. If we are putting off the "old man" then such feelings do not originate in us and we are not to blame for them (Mark 7:21-23). (Rom. 4:18,19; 10:17; Heb. 11:13; James 1:3; I Peter 1:7)
4. Faith is often made nearly impossible by the failure to practice the truth. (Matt. 21:32; Mark 4:40; John 5:44,47; I Timothy 1:19; Heb. 3:7-4:2)

I. A Basic Biblical Exhortation Regarding Faith, Hebrews 4:1-3.

A. The Historical Background.

1. God had promised Canaan to the Jewish people, Gen. 12:7; 13:15; Num. 13:2.
2. He graciously revealed Himself and His greatness so the Israelites could learn to trust Him, Numbers 14:11,22.
3. The Israelites failed to trust God and enter the land, Num. 13:26-33; 14:1-10.
4. Due to their failure they lost the opportunity to claim the promise of God and inherit the land of Canaan, Numbers 14:23-35.

5. When the Israelites learned that they were not going to be allowed to enter Canaan they chose to enter the next day -- failing to see that their action was not one of faith. Faith changes a person and that transformation was necessary for Israel to take the land. An act of "faith" without the transformation and grace which comes from genuine faith is one of presumption, Numbers 14:40-45; Romans 14:23.

B. The Principle: The Word of God must be "mixed" with faith, Hebrews 4:1-3.

1. The warning: a description of Israel's failure, Hebrews 3:7-19.

- a. The Word of God comes to us demanding an immediate and constant response (decisions of faith), Hebrews 3:7,13,15. Israel failed to do this.

- b. The response of faith comes from the heart - an act of the total person in honesty, Hebrews 3:8,10,12,15. Israel failed to do this.

- c. Failure to mix the Word of God with faith brings serious consequences.

- 1). A hardened heart, Hebrews 3:8,13,15.

- 2). A "testing" of God, Hebrews 3:9.

- 3). An "erring" in heart which leads to an "evil heart" of unbelief, Hebrews 3:10,12.

- 4). Such an attitude of unbelief leads to provoking (becoming bitter against God), Hebrews 3:16; grieving God, Hebrews 3:17; sinning against God, Hebrews 3:17; and not believing (not obeying God), Hebrews 3:18.

- 5). Their failure to respond to God kept the Israelites from entering Canaan, Hebrews 3:19; 4:1,2.

2. The counsel.

- a. Take heed - examine yourselves, Hebrews 3:12.

- b. Exhort one another continually, Hebrews 3:13.

- c. Persevere in faith, Hebrews 3:14.
- d. Be fearful of failure, Hebrews 4:1.
- e. Labour (be diligent) to claim God's promises and experience His rest, Hebrews 4:11.
- f. Choose to trust God through His Word, Hebrews 4:12.
- g. Be honest with God, Hebrews 4:13.

## II. Illustrations of Decisions of Faith.

- A. Faith and Salvation, John 1:12.
- B. Faith and the Old Nature, Romans 6:6, 11-13.
- C. Faith and the New Nature, Romans 6:4, 11-13.
- D. Faith and Resisting the Enemy, Ephesians 6:11-18; I Peter 5:8,9.
- E. Faith and the Filling of the Holy Spirit, John 7:37-39; 16:14; Eph. 5:18.
- F. Faith and the Confession of Sin, I John 1:9.
  - 1. Choose to confess it as a sin.
  - 2. Choose to forsake it as a sin.
  - 3. Choose to believe God that He will forgive and cleanse you.
  - 4. Choose to receive Jesus Christ as the specific cleansing that is needed.
  - 5. Choose to believe God - He has cleansed you - live as a cleansed person.