

## The Biblical Explanation of Faith (3)

### Introduction

A. There are three virtues that are constantly emphasized in the Bible. They are faith, love, and hope. If we are to live a successful Christian life we must have a knowledge of what these virtues mean as distinguishing characteristics of daily life.

B. One important aspect of faith has to do with the realization that it is an enablement or gift that we receive and exercise when we become a believer. All Christians have the ability to express faith as a function.

### I. The Spirit of Faith - the Believer's Affirmation, II Corinthians 4:13.

We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken, we also believe and therefore speak.

Observation: In this chapter the Apostle Paul, is describing some of the severe trials that had come into his life. His emphasis in this verse, which is a quotation from Psalm 116:10, is that of the Psalmist. It is a matter of believing God, in spite of the problems, and making the affirmation that God was in control and was working out His plan. This is a very important principle. In spite of what may turn up in our daily life we need to believe God and affirm that belief by speaking and living.

### II. The Hearing of Faith - the Believer's Responsibility, Galatians 3:2,3.

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Observation: The church at Galatia had been influenced by false teachers who were emphasizing the necessity of a legalistic, formalistic way of life. The believers were told that they would make great progress in the Christian life if they would follow carefully prescribed rules. Paul reminded them how they had become believers and had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit by the "hearing of faith", i.e., by responding to God on the basis of the Scripture and receiving Jesus Christ as Savior. To think that spiritual progress was by some other method is a contradiction to the very principle of the Bible.

### III. The Household of Faith - the Believer's Relationship, Galatians 6:10.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Observation: This reference to faith indicates the distinguishing characteristic mentioned in the introduction. All true believers have the same basic content of faith - what they believe. We also share the same relationship with God and the same ability - namely, that of expressing faith in God through His Word. What a wonderful group of people it is to whom we have been united by the grace of God. What glorious privileges are ours, and what an amazing future is in store for us.

IV. The Unity of the Faith - the Believer's Unity, Ephesians 4:13.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Observation: In this chapter Paul is describing spiritual gifts and the benefits which should come to the body of Christ through them. The "edifying" to which he refers in V.12 will result in what he calls "the unity of the faith". This is not only a growth in faith so that the believer is exercising faith in all areas of his life but expressing faith like that in regard to the other believers. The Christian who tries to live isolated from other Christians is doing so out of the will of God. We must give and receive with one another as God has given us gifts and responsibilities. One important facet of maturity in the faith - is to understand our relationship with one another.

V. The Shield of Faith - the Believer's Protection, Ephesians 6:16.

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Observation: The reference to faith in this verse has to do with the content of the faith, i.e., the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. If we will "take" this and hold up the work of Christ between us and Satan we will escape his "fiery darts". This activity of taking refuge in and behind the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is in itself an activity of faith. These "fiery darts" may be through the words of a person (Matt. 16:22,23) or even from a direct Satanic source (Matt. 4:3). When the Apostle said this was to be done "above all" is an indication of how necessary and important it is for every believer every day. (I Thess. 5:8)

VI. The Joy of Faith - the Believer's Joy, Philippians 1:25.

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.

Observation: This verse explains one of the benefits of faith - joy. Paul is talking of coming to see his friends in Philippi. He speaks of the anticipation of what that would mean by referring to joy. Their fellowship together and ministry one to another would produce the rejoicing that is so pronounced in this verse. They all belonged to God and to one another. The practice of that "faith" would result in joy. What a tragedy it is when believers do not enjoy the Lord or one another.

VII. The Work of Faith - the Believer's Work, I Thessalonians 1:3.

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.

Observation: Faith, as we have seen, is not only an intellectual assent to a group of truths - but is inseparably related to action. For our faith to be genuine it must be expressed in practice. Here Paul refers to the believers at Thessalonica as manifesting their faith in action. Our faith should influence all that we do.

Victor M. Matthews