

The Biblical Explanation of Faith

Introduction

A. Faith is probably the second most important virtue in the Bible. It is exceeded only by love. Without faith it is impossible to please God, Hebrews 11:6. This shows its importance and value in our lives.

B. Faith is not a feeling but a decision. It is a choice to trust a person and to take his word and put it into practice.

I. Full of Faith - the Believer's Goal, Acts 6:5,8.

And the saying pleased the whole multitude and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit . . . and Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Observation: This designation of Stephen as "full of faith" indicates how he had learned to utilize the gifts that God had given to him. He was exercising his dependence on God and obedience to His Word in all the areas of his life. In particular Stephen was trusting God to use him in ministering to the needs of the people about him. This should be our goal.

II. The Door of Faith - the Believer's Opportunity, Acts 14:27.

And when they were come and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

Observation: Paul and Barnabas had returned from their evangelistic tour to the church at Antioch which had earlier sent them out (13:1-4). During their tour a remarkable event had occurred. They were led of God to preach to Gentiles. Up to now the message was to be given primarily to the Jews to prepare them to reach the Gentiles. When the Jewish people refused (13:44-47) the Lord opened the door to the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas had no idea of how greatly the Lord was going to use them. We need to pray that God would prepare and use us to give out His Word.

III. The Obedience of Faith - the Believer's Characteristic, Romans 1:5; 16:26.

By Whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name. . . made known to all nations for obedience of faith.

Observation: Here the term "faith" is used to refer to the content of the Gospel. This is what we believe and the pattern for our daily life. Paul is speaking of the goal of his ministry- -- so people would believe and obey God. The true believer will be characterized by obedience (I John 2:3-5).

IV. The Law of Faith - the Believer's Understanding, Romans 3:26,27.

To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.

Observation: In this passage Paul is explaining how we are justified (declared righteous and forgiven) by faith. The Jewish people erroneously thought they were justified by their works. No one can do that (Rom. 3:10). We can only receive what God has done for us in Christ. The word "law" here is used as "pattern". The true believer knows that we are justified by the "pattern of action of faith".

V. The Righteousness of Faith - the Believer's Provision, Romans 4:11,13.

And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also . . . For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Observation: Here the Apostle is correcting another false belief of the Jewish people. They thought they were accepted by God simply because they were of the physical seed of Abraham. Paul shows the distinguishing mark of the people of God to be faith. God has provided all things for us in Christ - we receive Him, by faith, and through Him all of the provision of God. (Ephesians 1:3; II Peter 1:3)

VI. The Word of Faith - the Believer's Message, Romans 10:8.

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith, which we preach.

Observation: Here the word "faith" is again used as "content of the faith". This is the gospel which is to be preached to all people everywhere (Matthew 23:18-20). God has not left us without truth. The Christian is privileged indeed to know the message and to have the opportunity to live and speak the gospel.

VII. The Measure of Faith - the Believer's Gift, Romans 12:3,6.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith ... Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.

Observation: God has given to each believer certain gifts or enablements that are to be used among us as an expression of our faith. No one has been left out. We each need one another.

Conclusion: Let us make the right decisions and obey God.

Victor M. Matthews