

Faith

by Gareth Evans

Faith is a deeper trust and commitment to God, which requires action and obedience, and is not the same as hope or positive thinking.

Duration: 48:29

Scripture: Ephesians 1:15, Hebrews 10:23

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares an illustration of the gift of faith. The board of an inner-city church is concerned about the problems faced by the children in their community, such as drug abuse. They discuss the possibility of bringing in a young worker or pastor to reach out to these young people, but some board members are against it due to financial constraints. The pastor suggests that they pray about it and reconvene the following week. The speaker also mentions the importance of considering all relevant verses and not just selectively quoting them to support one's beliefs. Additionally, the speaker encourages the congregation to greet and get to know one another, and mentions visiting individuals who are in need of support.

Transcript

We are blessed this morning with a number of visitors among us. I'm not going to take the time out to introduce them all, but I would ask you please, before you leave today, to greet them and get to know them. One of the joys of Christian fellowship, you know, is meeting other brothers and sisters in Christ.

I find that a great joy when I meet you, new friends, I've made so many new friends in the past month, and I always love it when I meet new Christians. Because you see, one of the reasons I go to church is to get my feet washed. I mentioned this to you the first time I was here, I think.

And when Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he said to us that we are to do the same to one another. And though it's a blessing to be in a church where maybe that is practiced, and I have been in about two or three actual foot washing ceremonies, it's been a great blessing, but I think really what Jesus is saying there is that we are called to be servants of one another, to refresh one another. One of the blessings of church is that we can fellowship with one another afterwards, greet one another, encourage one another, and you may not know what a blessing you could be to somebody else this morning as they leave the service.

I imagine that almost every congregation in Nineveh today has people in the congregation who need their feet washed. They've been through some valley this week, they've been through some hard places. You can't be in this world very long without the dirt of this world rubbing off on you.

And so I would encourage you afterwards to spend a little time in greeting one another, getting to know one another, particularly those who are visitors among us this morning. Larry mentioned that we had the joy of visiting with Tim earlier this week. He's got a multicolored, technicolor leg that is broken, and all colors of bruises you could imagine.

It was good to be there to encourage him. Also, we went to visit Norman Barr, as some of you may remember his widow, his wife who used to be cabinet of this church. I think it was Elaine or Evelyn, I can't remember the name.

Then he wanted to express to you his appreciation for this church and what it meant to his wife. And so I thought you'd be interested to know that some of you may remember him. And then last night, Carson, I went to visit Avro Palbrigo, is that right there? And she's in very good spirit.

She's very immobile. She's a very slow walker. But she again expressed her love to you and just wanted us to express that to you.

So I tell you that. She would love a visit. I'm sure if some of you are able to visit with her and some of you remember her.

It's a good time to be there. Before I turn to the world this morning, I want to pick up where Audrey introduced us a couple of weeks ago to the praying through the 1040 window. You may not know, some of you may not know, the 1040 window are those horizontal lines of latitude across Europe and into Asia between the 10th parallel and the 40th, in which 90% of the Muslim world existed there.

Certainly the prayer place that all the religions of the world are represented there. And there's great persecution for the church there. But it's a window into which there are many opportunities.

And I know people right now who are working in many of those countries as school teachers, as businessmen, but really there to represent the gospel of Jesus Christ. And for those of you who did pick up the books, you will know that today we're beginning that 40 days of prayer through the month of Ramadan to pray alongside the Muslims who are praying, but we as Christians are praying for the Muslim world. And today's subject is Uzbekistan.

For those of you who got the book, but also in the little booklet, there was a prayer request for those Muslims in Canada. And I would like to just read out what this week's prayer requests are to give you a focus, maybe during this week for you to be praying. I'm just going to read a few of these things.

There are more than 15 mosques in greater Vancouver. There are six in Edmonton. There are four in Calgary.

There are two in Winnipeg, 12 in Montreal and 30 in Toronto. We're encouraged to pray that the Lord would break through the hearts of Muslims in Canada with his truth. Pray that the Canadian church will cultivate love for local Muslims and take active steps to encourage their members to reach out to their Muslim neighbors.

There are 400 to 500 Turks in the greater Vancouver area and only one known follower of Christ among them. No one is rich in them. Please pray for power to break through tradition and fear.

Pray for those who are currently preparing for overseas career work among Muslims. Pray for many more workers to be raised at the work among Muslims, both locally and internationally. There are 800,000 Muslims in Canada and that number is growing.

Few Canadian churches intentionally reach out to local Muslims. Pray that many more would see their calling among these least reached in their midst. Sameer is a Christian worker from Egypt.

He has an internet ministry and Arab speaking television and radio broadcasting in the West and in the Middle East. Pray for Sameer and for his radio work that they may have open doors and effective witness. Sean and Iris and Thais and Vivian are in Calgary reaching Muslims and new immigrants through personal contact.

Pray for wisdom in responding to the many requests for assistance from inquirers. Also pray for new believers, deepening of friendships and opportunities to share the love of Jesus. There's a prayer request for Canada for this coming week and maybe they slipped through your mind but please I would encourage you in your private prayer time to remember the Muslims of Canada and if you are praying through the 40 days as I certainly shall be, I encourage you to be remembering these people and particularly those working among them.

It is encouraging if you read this book and certainly encouraging I was in West Africa for a number of years to see the large number of Muslims today who are coming to faith in Christ through visions and dreams in direct answer to the prayers of God's people. So please pray not only for the 1040 window but for Muslims in Canada. That's the pastor's trauma for this morning so I encourage you to be doing that actively.

I'd like you to turn to the book of Ephesians and I'm going to quote my text which I've taken for the last three weeks again. Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church. Having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus this is chapter 1 verse 15.

Having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love for all the saints I do not cease giving thanks for you while making mention of you in my prayers praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the father of glory may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of himself. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you will know what is the hope of his calling. This goes as far as that.

Here in these few verses we have those three jewels of the Christian faith faith, hope and love. We find them of course in that wonderful chapter on love in 1 Corinthians but I have found at least seven places where Paul and seven places where Paul and Peter has linked those three jewels together. I think we as a church and we as Christians really do need to study to grasp what those jewels are that these men are speaking about.

I want to speak much on hope. I find very little preaching on hope in the church and I want to speak much on hope over the next couple of weeks but in introduction to that I need to speak first about faith and today I want to speak on what it is the faith without which it's impossible to please God. The faith of which Paul speaks when he calls us to walk the walk of faith.

To live the life of faith. What he means when he talks about works of faith. Now the difficulty we have in the English language English is a very irregular language.

It is not an easy language for students to learn because there are so many irregularities in it but it's also a language that is very weak in many of its ability to describe and explain things. Let me give you a simple example. We read about the sermon on the mountain Jesus sat down and taught them saying St. Matthew's gospel chapter 5 introduced the sermon on the mountain.

The Greek word there that is translated Jesus sat down is what they call the imperfect tense. It means that Jesus was in the habit of sitting down. Jesus used to sit down.

Now in the Spanish language it has two different tense which make that very clear but the English language doesn't make it clear and we immediately get the impression Jesus sat down once and taught them saying and then he's got about 15 sermons linked into one digit whereas the Greek very clearly shows that Jesus was in the habit of sitting down and teaching them these things. Very different emphasis and English is very weak in that. It is very weak in the use of the word faith.

We talk about the Muslim faith the Jewish faith, the Christian faith. We talk about a dog being faithful to its master. We talk about a picture being a faithful representation of the person whose picture it is.

But we have the word faith and faithful very often used in our language in many different ways and we have brought that over into our Christian understanding of faith. And so I want to speak about what it is I believe the Bible is teaching about when we have these teachers consider faith in the Bible. Paul said we are justified by faith.

He says that several times in Ephesians and in Romans. James however says that you say you have faith I want to see your faith in action because faith without works is dead. And immediately we have a conflict between Paul who says you are justified by faith not by works lest any man should boast and James who says you say you have faith I want to see it in your works for faith without works is dead.

Now which of those is right? The conflict is only in English. The Holy Spirit certainly wasn't confused when he penned those words or led his men to pen those words because I believe this word of God is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Do you? He doesn't make mistakes.

So if there is a conflict apparently in what these two men believe then really we need to look at them and see what how the conflict is resolved because it surely must be resolved because the Holy Spirit didn't put the conflict there. Those who follow Paul who are Pauline Christians as most of us are probably all of us and follow the teachings of Paul and revel in the writings of Paul we might look at the book of James and say oh you know that really shouldn't be in the Bible. Martin Luther said that.

The book of James is but a book of straw he said it should not be there. Well with due respect to Martin Luther who was a great man used mightily of God I think the Holy Spirit is probably a little wiser than Martin Luther was and the Holy Spirit thought he should be there. Those who side with James and believe that your faith should be evidenced in works maybe even to the detriment of faith and the emphasis of works they would call Pauline Christians like you and me fundamentalists with a little bit of a disdain.

Well I'm a fundamentalist Christian who believes in the book of James and I also believe in the writings of Paul particularly when it comes to matters of faith. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 verse 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever believes in him should not

perish and have everlasting life. Now if I link those words of Jesus with the words of Paul then obviously being justified is based upon my believing in him.

Amen? But then Jesus later talking to his disciples said these words to his disciples go into all the world and preach the gospel he who believes and is baptized shall be saved. Paul goes further and says he who confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believes in his heart shall be saved. But to the Philippian jailer after the earthquake shook the walls and God broke into that prison releasing Paul and Silas he says to the Philippian jailer if you believe you shall be saved and your household.

Now it seems to me in reading those stories concerning being saved they seem to say some different things. Am I saved by believing? Am I justified by believing? Do I need to be baptized in order to be justified? Do I need to confess in order to be justified? So what is faith? Is faith confessing and believing? Is faith believing and being baptized? Is faith simply believing? What is faith? The faith that pleases God without which I cannot be saved for I'm justified by faith which is correct. Or may I ask the question another way which is in error? Or may I ask the question yet another way is it possible that they're all correct? They're incorrect maybe only in the confusion that they raise in our minds.

Such confusion actually was evident in the scriptures. Now I use an NASB. I want to make it very clear I am not a one bible translation man but the one of the reasons we have so many translations in English is because of some of the confusions with words and many people today don't read the King James Version because well that's old English every year we get older the book gets more confusing.

I confess I like the King James Version but I can find things in the King James Version that don't mean the same today as they did when they were written. Just as I can find things in the NASB Version don't really mean the same things as what I think King James was saying or the version some years ago. Let me give you one example.

Hebrews chapter 10 verse 23 just an example look at it with me. I love the book of Hebrews that's what I'm teaching in adult class at the moment. Does anyone here have a King James Version? The old King James Version not the new and the old King James.

Would you be willing to stand for me and I know you would you sing from the bottom of your heart you sing out beautifully you can stand up and speak for me to the people. Just read for me chapter 10 verse 23 in the King James old King James Version not the new King James Version. Nice and loud.

Did you hear that? Let us hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering. I mean our Christian faith is something we want to confess. The only problem is that in the Greek the word faith is not there.

The NIV tells you what the real word is. What does the NIV say? Some of you followed that in your scriptures and it did not say faith did it? Hope. Well is faith the same as hope? The Greek word is *elpis* which is hope.

It is not *pistis* which is Greek for faith. So why did the King James Version translators say let us hold fast the confession of our faith? The reason being that they thought hope isn't something you confess but faith is. Now other versions later use the word hope because that is the correct word.

I'm just showing you the confusion that you may get particularly if you're the kind of person as sadly many Christians are who take one verse from the scripture and build a whole doctrine around it. The reason we have cults and sects in the Christian church is because exactly that. Somebody has taken a verse of

scripture which blessed them and they built a whole following around that verse.

Don't bother me with the context. Don't bother me with other verses. I believe that Jesus is coming soon.

How many of you believe that? Now in the views concerning Jesus coming soon there are those who are called pre-tribulationists. I'm not going to embarrass you by asking you how many of you are pre-tribulationists. Probably most of you believe in that Jesus will take us and rapture us out of the church before the tribulation.

There are however in the evangelical church many Christians just who love the Lord just as much as you and I who believe that we will go through the tribulation. They're called post-tribulationists. There are many however who believe that we will go through three and a half years of tribulation followed by three and a half years of being raptured.

Mid-tribulationists. There are those facetiously called pan-tribulationists. You've heard of them? They're the ones who believe it all pan out anyway.

Now I'm not going to tell you which of those schools I lean toward. Because I know if I tell you that I'm going to get two or three people afterwards coming up to me to try to show that I'm wrong. And I can tell you what books you've been reading or film strips you've been watching.

I was in Australia and a man came to Australia who wanted to teach on the Jewish view of the second coming of Christ. I thought that would be interesting. And I went to hear him.

He spoke for two hours the most fascinating lecture I've been in for a long time and I was struck not with the verses that he was saying and quoting as proof but the fact I'd never heard those verses before. I have become more struck whenever I listen to people talk about a pre-trip, post-trip, mid-trip, whatever position they hold. I'm far more struck with the verses they don't quote than the verses they do quote.

We are very, very good at using a few verses to justify what we believe and ignoring everything else. That's what we tend to do. Faith, there is much confusion about the use of this word.

Let me tell you four things that faith is not. Faith is not belief. The devils believe.

If you went around Canada today and interviewed people as some of these surveys do, they will come up with reports. They will tell you that 80% of Canadians believe that Jesus rose from the dead. It makes absolutely no difference in their life.

It certainly hasn't got, they haven't got the faith without which it's impossible to please God. They believe, but it means nothing more. Faith is not belief.

Secondly, I would suggest to you that faith is not presumption. Have you met those presumptuous Christians who operate faith like this? I've been praying for God to heal my eyesight. The word of God is if I pray, believe in, if I have faith, God will answer my prayer.

Therefore, I'll smash my glasses. That's called presumption. That's not faith.

Presumption is a sin. I know of churches in my former denomination, of churches in BC that were growing large. And so the board of elders decided they would build an extension to the building to be a \$1 million extension.

But as they planned, they decided to build bigger and bigger and bigger. God was in it. God was blessing the church.

They built something like a \$5 or \$6 million extension. How many of you remember the year in the 80s when the mortgage rates went up to 26, 27%? That was the time. Suddenly, the local lumber mills closed down.

True story. The churches were in an \$8 million debt, mortgage. People in the church now lost their jobs.

A lot of people moved out because they didn't want to be in a church encumbered with a burden like that. And then suddenly, everybody was blaming God for not coming through. God wasn't in it from the beginning.

They thought they were operating faith. They were actually operating presumption. Faith is not presumption.

Faith is not belief. Faith is not hope. They are two different jewels.

To say that I've got faith that God is going to do this when really it's something I'm hoping is not faith. Somebody is sick and you're praying for them and you're hoping God will heal them. That is not faith.

It is hope in the natural sense, not in the spiritual sense. And faith is not positive thinking. We have churches built about positive thinking.

They're called Word of Faith churches. The business world will tell you what you think you are, you are. And so we brought that into the church.

And if you're sick, just believe God that you're not going to be sick. That's the devil telling you you're sick, you're not really sick. They often go by words like name it, claim it churches.

They call name it faith. And so they claim it. Let me not be too severe on these people because they do have a grasp of scripture that maybe we need to grasp as well.

But they're not operating in faith. If you confess with your mouth that you're not sick, then you're not sick. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is your riches, and therefore you're not living in poverty, even though week by week you're not getting enough money to put food on the table.

Faith is not positive thinking. You cannot think yourself into health. You cannot think yourself into prosperity.

You cannot think yourself into answer prayers. Faith is not these things. I'd like to take as my second text.

Am I allowed a second text? I mean, many pastors in England have one. Can I have a second text? I'm going to take a second text. I'd like you to turn to the book of Thessalonians, please.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 8. Since we have a day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. As a breastplate of faith and love. We all acknowledge that love is an attribute of the heart.

I love you with all my heart. Nobody ever said, I love you with all my head. Though love should also be part of that.

We have no problem with recognizing that love is an attribute of the heart. But this scripture would say to me that faith also is an attribute of the heart. For the breastplate of faith and love covers the heart.

It does not cover the mind or the head. Hope has got far more to do with believing than faith has. This is why the scripture uses expression like this.

If you believe with your heart. Now I was trained as a physicist. I taught physics in secondary school.

So you've heard me say before many years. I was used to teaching scientific facts. And I could teach things such as the law of gravity or whatever you like, the electromagnetic laws, whatever it is.

I was teaching facts that I could verify and prove. And I believed things. I believe that the planets rotate around the sun and we can describe mathematically their orbit.

If I took these keys out of my pocket and I dropped them, they would fall to the floor. There are certain things I believe with my head. I come to believe in them because it's a rational thing to do, to believe in them.

I've seen it operate and so rationally, I believe that's going to happen. My wife keeps telling me I'm too logical. That's who I am, praise God.

I think too much. She's far more intuitive than I am. I'm a head person.

I believe with my head. That is not Christian faith. I believe Christian faith to be an attribute of the heart.

Let me show you why. I see three aspects of faith in the scriptures I would like to take you to. I have three references.

If you'd like to turn with them, make notes of them. Ephesians 2, verses 8 to 9, verses you will know very well. By grace, you are saved through faith.

And that there of yourselves, it is a gift from God. How many of you believe that verse to be true? How many of you have experienced that verse to be true? Praise God. My second reference is found in Galatians chapter 5, verse 22.

The works of the flesh are these. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith. I know some people say faithfulness because they think of faithfulness as a characteristic of people.

But it's not faithfulness. It is faith. It's a fruit of the spirit.

I did tell you the story. I'm not going to repeat it about the garden I had in Toronto watching the branches trying to string. Did I tell you the story? I tell so many stories.

I'm sorry, I keep repeating myself. We watched this branch on our apple tree for those who were not there. Well, we were newly in Toronto.

We heard a strange noise. And we looked at my wife and I was sitting on a garden seat and we heard a strange noise. And we looked and we saw the branch of our apple tree swelling.

And out popped this beautiful red apple. What are you laughing at, Cindy? You don't believe me? Then another branch was swelling. And out came this beautiful red apple.

And all over the apple tree the branches were straining themselves to produce apples. Isn't that foolish? You know that's not true. You all think it's a very foolish illustration.

The truth is this, however, that many Christians are just like our apple tree. They think they can produce fruit by straining. You cannot produce the fruit of the spirit by any effort of your own.

The righteous man or woman is like a tree, said the psalmist, planted by the river of water that brings forth fruit in season. The tree does not strain to bring forth the fruit. It just abides by the river and allows the river to produce in the tree the character of the tree.

When you and I are Christians and the spirit of God dwells in us, he is the river of water that produces the fruit of the spirit as we abide in Christ. As you abide in me, said Jesus, and I abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit. You cannot produce the fruit by your efforts.

I'm going to have joy in my life even if it kills me. I'm going to have faith to believe. Brother, you're not feeling well.

You need more faith. That might be absolutely true, but you cannot produce one iota of faith. My third reference is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Concerning spiritual gifts. And as you go down there, we read these words. For the manifestation of the gifts of the spirit in verse seven and nine.

To one is given a manifestation of the spirit for the common good of all. To one is given a word of wisdom, another word of knowledge, another faith by the same spirit. Let me give an illustration of the gift of faith.

The board of an inner city church decide that there is a lot of problem with the inner city kids around their church. They decide they have to do something about these children to reach them. They're sniffing glue, and they're shooting up and everything.

So at their board meeting, a very sincere, shall we say, six men on the board or six people on the board, they raise a question about possibly bringing in a young worker, a pastor to reach these young people. One of the men said, we can't afford it. We don't have enough money in their budget or the bank.

And that's a true story, true. So the pastor says to them, I want you to go away this week, and I want you to pray about this, and let's meet next Tuesday. They come together the following Tuesday, and as they walk through the door, you, a little fly on the wall, can read their minds.

First man is against, can't afford it. Second man comes in, he's for it. Third person comes in, for it.

Fourth person is against it. The fifth person is against it, and the pastor doesn't know which way to go. You think to yourself, however, are they going to resolve this? The pastor said, let's pray, and they pray.

And he said, John, Larry, what do you think? And Larry shared his thoughts. And he said, what do you think? What do you think? And as they go around the circle, one of those who came in against, I don't know, pastor, but I came in here and feel that we couldn't do this. But as I've listened to Larry and Peter speaking, you know, I think we can.

I know we should. I think we can. And suddenly, they're unanimous.

They all agree that they're going to do it. Why? Because God has given them the gift of faith. Operated for that circumstance, for that time.

It could be different circumstances. Maybe you're praying for a sick loved one, and suddenly God gives you the deep assurance of faith that this is going to happen. That's the gift of faith.

So we have what I call saving faith. And sadly, most Christians, maybe the word most, small letters, yeah, most Christians, live their lives operating in saving faith. They trust in Jesus for their salvation.

They trust in Jesus in some ways. He's got an influence in their life. But they really haven't grown into a walk of faith to really know what it is to know him.

They haven't developed the fruit of faith in their lives, or the spirit of God has. They never operated in the gift of faith. They haven't seen it operate.

But as I look at these three aspects, I'm struck with this one thing. All three have their source in God. Faith, first thing about faith we can ever learn, the faith that pleases God is the faith that has its source in God.

Paul speaks about faith, being justified by faith. He has several chapters on faith. And he likens faith, he takes the example of Abraham, the patriarch of the children of Israel, who left Ur of the Chaldees not knowing whether he was going.

Being moved by the spirit of God, just as Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness after his baptism, so Abraham was being led by the spirit. Though he did not know God, he worshipped false gods in Ur of the Chaldees. They were magicians and soothsayers.

They worshipped false gods. But Abraham is being led by God because God has chosen out for himself a man from whom he is going to birth a nation, from whom he is going to bring the Messiah. And all of Abraham's life, you see him progressing through the place of learning more and more about God.

He pretended his wife was his sister so that he would escape death. Twice he did that. He had to be reprimanded by heathen kings for his lack of trust in God.

He's not a trusting God, but he's living the life of faith because God is moving him. God is doing something through this man. And Abraham uses him as the example.

James uses Abraham as the example too, but he has a second example about faith. He talks about Rahab the harlot. What a strange choice.

If I were looking for examples in Old Testament history for men of faith, I'd look at men like Daniel. But Daniel is never mentioned as an example of faith, but Rahab is. Rahab was the woman in Jericho when the spies came, she hid them under a bale.

She was a traitor to her own people. She was known as a prostitute. Whether she was or not, that's not certain.

She lived in a house on the wall so she could look out. But something within her was saying that these two men who had no threat to her people, Jericho was a secure city, but she knew something about their God. And she betrayed her own people because she was being opened up to a revelation that God was making her himself.

She's the example. I often ask people to give me a definition of faith and they come up with words like this. Well, faith is a substance of things hoped for.

The evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 12, 1. And I ask them, what does that mean? And they don't know. Isn't it easy to quote a verse to define something without really know what it's saying? What is the evidence of things not seen? What is the thing that we hope for? The substance of things hoped for.

Well, have you ever seen a child as Christmas approaches or birthday time approaches, particularly in a Christmas tree and they've got all those lovely colored parcels under the tree. A little Johnny sees his name on that big box and he's longing, longing, longing for the day when that box will be given to him so he can tear that brightly colored paper off and see the substance of what he hopes for. That's a gift.

Things you long for or wait for and finally receive and it becomes substance in your hand. That's a gift. What about the evidence of things not seen? Well, the Bible even quotes that verse.

It says, by their fruit you shall know them. The evidence of what God has done in your life and mine is evidence in the fruit that flows out of us. You can do works and people think you're a fine Christian but if deep inside nothing has happened by the Spirit of God there will be little evidence in fruit in your life.

You're not going to be a transformed changed man or woman. But the evidence of things not seen is fruit and all I'll write it to the Hebrews is saying is that faith is a gift. Substance of things hope is a fruit.

Evidence of things not seen which is exactly the same thing as Paul has said. A fruit and a gift that have their source in God. If you find the examples of Ray of the Harlot striking and Hebrews 11 quite striking because Daniel's not there and a few others I would have chosen are not there.

And if you read to the end of the book of Hebrews chapter 11 you will find that by faith women gave their children up to the mouths of lions. People were persecuted and put to death. They were torn asunder by faith.

It doesn't say that in their torment in their suffering they had faith they believed. It doesn't say that. It says by faith they give them up because God was doing something through them the source of our faith was God.

He was doing something through them that they could not understand any more than Abraham understood where it was when he left her of the colony. But God was doing something. God was operating in faith.

It's striking also to look at the six examples that Jesus has concerning men and women of faith. I have no time to go into those but I'm going to give you their reference and if you'd like to look at them yourself please do. I encourage you to do so.

Only six people did Jesus commend for their faith. Three of them were non-Jews. None of them were his disciples.

Three of them were unclean should never come and touch the teacher. I'll give you their stories and references. I won't give you their stories you can read them up you know their stories.

One was the Roman centurion. I've not seen faith like this in all of Israel. If you want to find the reference Matthew 8 verse 5 on it.

The woman with an issue of blood if I touch the hem of his garment I shall be healed. Your faith has made you whole said Jesus. How did she know to touch the hem of his garment? Had she read a book that told if you touch his garment she didn't know that.

How did she know she'd never heard Oral Robertson TV do you remember Oral Robertson TV? Reach out and touch the television set. She never heard that. How did she know to touch the hem of his garment? She'd never read any medical books that said that would work but the spirit of God had spoken to her spirit said reach out and touch.

And she touched. Her reference is in Mark chapter 5. Canaanite woman comes to Jesus and asks for her daughter in Matthew 15. Jesus said I do not give the bread to the dogs.

What a thing to say to the woman. Yes she said and revelation spoke through her that said yes but even the dogs the Gentiles are going to receive the crumbs that fall from the table. That was the first prophecy in the New Testament concerning you and I as Gentiles receiving the salvation of God.

Through the lamb the Jewish lamb who was slain on the Jewish cross for you and me. There's blind Bartimaeus in Mark chapter 10. Jesus the son of David which is the call of the Messiah the name of the Messiah.

In his blindness he saw more than the crowd saw when there were two eyes opened because God gave him in a revelation that this man this man was walking there and was the Messiah. It was to him that he called out. But the woman in Simon's house who anointed his feet with oil and wept upon his feet.

Simon said if he knew who she was he wouldn't be allowing her to do that and Jesus said Simon I come into your house you didn't even greet me but this woman is anointing me for burial. She was acting prophetically she did not understand that with her mind but she was acting in obedience or in a prompting of the spirit of God she was acting in faith. That one did I give you the reference is found in Luke 7. The last one in Luke 17 is the ten lepers.

Ten went away to be healed with the presence of the priest but only one came back. The scripture says and he was a Samaritan and Jesus said son your faith. He came back and he worshipped fallen at the feet of Jesus said he worshipped God.

The leper realized that this was none other than the son of God. How did he know that? In a revelation. God's finger God's word into his spirit into the woman with the issue of blood into the these Romans said till God's spirit spoke to that person's spirit and though their mind did not comprehend the words their spirit responded to the prompting of the spirit of God.

That is what faith is. That is what Jesus meant when he spoke to Peter and he said Peter he said first whom do men say that I am and Peter's the one who said thou art the Christ the son of God blessed are you Simon son of Jonah flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my father has revealed it. The revelation was to Peter's heart and to Peter's spirit long before it ever came to his head and out of that

revelation of the inner working of the spirit of God Peter made confession thou art the Christ.

Jesus then goes on and says your name shall no longer be called Peter it shall be called the rock for upon this rock I'm going to build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. What rock Peter? No, no, no Peter was a crumbling stone who crumbled at the words of a little girl in Pilate's judgment hall until filled with the spirit of God. What Jesus is saying is there I'm going to build my church upon men and women like you Peter who receive a revelation from God in their spirit not in their heads I'm not talking about hearing voices I'm talking about our spirits being so in tune with the spirit of God that when he says move right we move right.

When he says move left we move left when he says stop we stop not in the head I'm not talking about voices I'm talking about being led by the spirit of God because we walk in hand in hand with him the son. That's what faith is. So let me define faith for you.

I believe faith is an attribute of the heart evidenced in obedience. In obedience to what God the Holy Spirit says through his written word that speaks to our spirits dividing the soul from the spirit and allowing us to be free to follow what the spirit of God says. Obedience to the inner small voice of his spirit speaking to our spirits amidst all the clamor of all the other voices we hear in our minds.

Obedience when he convicts us and we respond by seeking again forgiveness and cleansing. Evidence in obedience to everything the spirit of God wants to do in us. One of the characteristics that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount is blessed is blessed is a man is the meek man.

We've got this false understanding that meekness is equivalent to weakness but Jesus was called meek. The word meek literally means teachable, moldable, pliable. We sing songs that we are clay in the potter's hand the clay in the potter's hand yields to every pressure of the fingers of the potter.

If there are lumps that he takes them out he keeps working upon it. I want to be such clay in the hands of my Lord that when he squeezes here there is the imprint of his thumb marks upon me. That is what faith is allowing him to do his work and having such a meek, pliable, teachable spirit that as he molds me I am pliable and he molds me.

That is what the work of faith is. Nothing to do with the head is to do with the heart. Allowing God to speak, to breathe, to put his finger into our spirit and to mold us and we yield in obedience to every little pressure of the finger of God or every little word from the mouth of God.

We yield because our spirits are in tune with him. That is what faith is. The faith that pleases God.

The faith that enables us to walk the walk of faith. So let me repeat. Faith is an attribute of the heart evidenced in obedience.

Evidenced in obedience. It's the finger of God in the hearts of men and women moving them to do his will. I made a decision when I came to understand this a few years ago.

I made a commitment to God that I was going to hold his hand. To know him as Abba father. And my commitment day by day to him is that I'm holding my father's hand.

I do not know where he's going to lead me tomorrow. Six weeks ago I did not know he's going to lead me to the departure of a Baptist church. I'm thrilled and delighted he brought me.

This is sweet time. This is honey time. This is pleasures like my earthly father periodically took me to the sweet shop.

My heavenly father has brought me to a sweet shop with you people. And I delight in the sweet shop of God. But I've learned this long ago in my walk that if I go to the sweet shop often then I often have to go to the dentist shop too.

And sometimes my heavenly father takes me to the dentist shop. But I'm holding his hand because I know the dentist shop is good for me. That's what the walk of faith is.

So committed to holding a father's hand trusting him to lead. I do not know where he'll lead me tomorrow but I know he holds tomorrow. I want to climb to that mountaintop but I know that he's going to probably have to take me through a valley to get there.

The walk of faith is not a walk in the beds of roses in lullaby fields full of daffodils. The walk of faith often takes us through the sloughs of despondent pain and suffering. I do not believe in a Christianity that is all victory and happiness and glory, glory, hallelujah.

Praise God it's going to be one day. If my savior was perfected through his suffering why should I ask for less? But the walk of faith with his sweet shops and his dentist shop with his valleys and his mountains comes to those who are committed to holding the hand of the father. My earthly father was not a Christian but he's a very good father.

I think if I was a little child holding his hand and somebody bounced a bouncing ball into the road I would leave my father's hand and go chasing after the little ball. I did it often. I do that as a Christian sometimes.

I let go of my father's hand and I run after the temptations of Satan. But just as my earthly father would never allow me to go out into that road while a 10 ton truck is coming around so my heavenly father has promised to keep me and he gathers me in by the work and of the spirit and pulls me back in before I fall into danger. That's the walk of faith.

And I've learned long ago I'm foolish to let go of his hand. Faith my brothers and sisters is not a commitment to believe in things and to do things and believe in a hope or presumption. Faith is commitment to hold the father's hand and allow him to lead where he will.

There is a verse in scripture I'm going to conclude with this that I find I give you a verse in King James a moment ago that does not say what the actual Greek says. There are many people who have this verse as well found in Galatians. It's a verse you all know very well and I'm going to suggest to you without you as you look into your Bible you're probably going to find it again a different translation to what the Greek says and believe me I'm not a Greek scholar.

I did two years of studying of Greek but I have learned how to use strong concordance with Greek. And I do know as Greek is a very classical language it means what it says. Look with me please in Galatians chapter 3 sorry chapter 2 verse 20 I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.

Can you say that this morning? Is that true? And the life which I now live in the flesh I live many of your Bibles are going to say this I live by faith in the son of God who gave himself for me. Is that true? Is that what your Bible says? If you've got the King James Version it does not say that. And the King James

Version this time is correct.

The King James Version says I live by the faith of the son of God who gave himself for me. Now you think about it they are two radically different things. Do I live this life by faith in him or by his faith in me? The Greek let me assure you the Greek says I live this life by his faith operative in me.

I live this life because he my Lord my King he is the one who speaks into me who breathes into me who puts his finger into me and prompts me to move this way and that. And if I am a meek man if my spirit is teachable and moldable he will produce in me what he wants to do just like he did in Abraham just like he did in Rahab the harlot just like he did in the people of the Old Testament just like he did with five young men who went to Ecuador in 1957 and who died upon the banks of the Karari River all of North America wept for these brilliant young American boys who died. How is God in this? What is God doing? They all cried.

But ten years later we saw a barrier broken down to the Oukar Indians that was fallen to the floor so that tens of thousands of Oukar Indians became believers in Christ because five men died in the banks of the Karari River. Did Jesus intend and plan for them to die? I suggest to you yes by faith these five young men died part of God's will so that God would open a breach in the walls that had trapped the Oukar Indians for centuries. That is how God operates.

So when I see things of valleys and despair I ask myself are you walking right now in the will of God? Are you walking in faith? That's what it means to be a man of faith walking the life of faith walking in obedience to it. And my prayer for me is that I will continue to walk a life holding his hand being led by him. I'm not asking to hear voices but I'm certainly asking for my spirit to be entombed with his so that his spirit can mold me prompt me, lead me, guide me.

I pray that may be true for you. Let's pray. Father thank you for this word.

I pray that you will speak to each of our spirits. Your word is sharper than any two-edged sword. It divides the soul from the spirit the natural man from the spiritual.

So we ask Lord that by your spoken word even the still small voice to us for us that you will make us men and women who work and walk and live in faith that pleases you. I ask you in Jesus name. Amen.

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