

Week 14: "The Nature of Faith"

Memory Verse

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." I John 5:1-5

Day One

Sunday, January 19, 2003

"The Truth Shall Set You Free"

Read: Hebrews 11 (p. 1432) and Commentary (p. 1434)

Reflect: In what things does our society put its faith and hope in? What saying about God appears on the U.S. currency? Do you see any irony here?

Dig: How does the definition of faith in verse 1 fit with verse 6 and also the illustrations of the heroes of faith in verses 4-24?

Notice the role of fear in most of the illustrations: vss. 7, 23, 27. How does faith defeat fear?

How is the statement regarding faith in verse 39 so much different than the "Health and Wealth" false teaching we hear of today?

Apply: Ask God to increase your faith, that is, to increase your trust in the unseen realities all around you and that your hope in a glorious future with God will be the driving force in your life. Now pray with deep trust for something you know to be part of God's will for your life.

Day Two

Monday, January 20, 2003

"The Object of our Faith"

Read: Hebrews 13:7-8 (p. 1437) and Commentary (p. 1437)

Reflect: The commentary states, "people don't always live according to what they profess, but they always live according to that they really believe." Is this true? Is this true for your life? Give an example.

Dig: Consider the context of this study: what does marriage and adultery; money and contentment have to do with the great faithfulness of Jesus? Take notice of the two reasons given in the commentary for trusting in Jesus as the object of our faith. What does II Timothy 3:14 have to do with the first reason? This text quotes two Old Testament passages; Deut. 31:6 (p. 225) and Psalm 118:6,7 (p. 669). Read those texts and the context and see if you can understand why the writer or Hebrews (under the direction of the Holy Spirit) thought of them in his flow of thought.

Apply: Turn to the prayer on page 1523 of the Freedom in Christ Bible and speak out loud the prayer that is entitled "Daily Prayer and Declaration." Now go and live a courageous day!

Day Three
Tuesday, January 21, 2003
"Growing in Faith"

Read: Romans 10:14-17 (p. 1292) and Commentary (p. 1293)

Reflect: What builds your trust in God?

What practice do you engage in when you are discouraged and look to God to build you up (put on gospel music, pray, read a devotional book, take a prayer-walk)?

Dig: What does this passage teach us about the supposedly old-fashioned communication practice of preaching? (see verse 14)

What does verse 17 say about how faith begins and grows? What is the significance of the phrase "word of Christ" in verse 17? To answer this question, take a look at John 1:1-9 (p. 1197) and also Colossians 3:16 (p. 1378).

Apply: Taking the challenge that if you only know 7 promises of God you only have that much faith (know only that much of the object of your faith), but if you know 7,000 promises of God, you know that much more, what promises of God from scripture should you memorize and live on?

Can you make a commitment to memorize the scripture we as a church are memorizing?

Day Four
Wednesday, January 22, 2003
"Faith and Works"

Read: James 2:14-26 (p. 1443) and Commentary (p. 1444)

Reflect: When do we use phrases like "the proof is in the pudding," or "actions speak louder than words"? What point are we trying to make?

Dig: Read John 15:1-8 and notice how many similarities there are between these two passages.

Why is James writing these things to his people? (hint, check out the preceding 13 verses of the chapter).

What might another more helpful way of speaking of real faith other than "believe"? See Psalm 37:4 (616) and Matt. 13:44-46 (p. 1097).

Apply: In what ways is God speaking to you through this passage about showing by your lifestyle (fruit) that you have the seed of faith growing in you? Ask God to help you change to reflect your trust in God.

Day Five
Thursday, January 23, 2003
"Living by Faith"

Read: Galatians 3:10-14 (p. 1347) and Commentary (p. 1348)

Reflect: How does religion sometimes feel like a life of trying harder?

Why are we so easily tempted to turn trust and belief into earning a right relationship to God?

Dig: Look up the four Old Testament texts which are quoted in these verses: (Notice what comes just before and after each passage)

- Deut. 27:26 (p. 221)
- Habbakuk 2:4 (p. 1038)

- Leviticus 18:5 (p. 129)
- Deuteronomy 21:23 (p. 216)

What progression do you see in God's revelation from Deuteronomy to Habbakuk to Galatians?

According to the commentary in paragraph three, what two negative consequences occur when we live under the law?

Apply: How would you personally answer the question posed by Galatians 3:3?

Conclude with a short prayer asking God to help you live by faith this day.