

Introduction

The Importance Of Faith

1st Corinthians. 13:13.

¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.

I have three messages to give here at O.I.C. from today the 10th, then the 12th, and the 19th, I want us to look each time at one of the three things written here that will remain forever. Faith, Hope, and Love, in that order. First of all let's see what the Bible says about the importance of faith.

Hebrews 11:6.

⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

The first part of this verse tells us the importance of faith, and the latter part tells us what true faith is. It is essential to have a relationship with God. True faith is not a belief in the existence of God only, but seeking God to know how we should live to please Him. The whole chapter of Hebrews 11 teaches us about faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Without faith there is no salvation, and it is faith which is given by God not something we are born with naturally.

Hebrews 12:2

² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith, so no need to worry if you feel you don't have enough faith. When anyone receives Jesus as personal Saviour, He gives us true faith and He also takes responsibility to perfect our faith.

In John chapter six Jesus taught that He is the Bread of Life, and from this chapter we can learn some of the characteristics of true faith.

1) Seeking God First

John 6:26-27.

²⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

These people had the day before seen Jesus' great miracle, and even participated by eating the miracle food. Soon after the miracle they tried to make Jesus their King. Jesus told them they are not seeking God but only material things of this world. They could not believe in Jesus even after seeing such a wonderful miracle because they were seeking the things of this world before God.

It is the same for everybody, we can only have true faith and the full assurance of faith when we are seeking God first before everything else.

Jeremiah 29:13.

¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Seeking God with all of our hearts means seeking God first, then we will find that God's promise is true. God will answer our prayer and give us the full assurance of faith.

Romans 10:17.

¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

This doesn't mean that if we just sit and listen to God's word faith will magically happen but when we obey it and confess Jesus as our Lord. Faith come through the Word of God.

Matthew 6:33

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

A wonderful promise for all who seek god first. Full and free forgiveness of all our sin plus the guarantee of all our material needs supplied. The only way to get true satisfaction is seeking God first before the things of this world.

2) Believing without Seeing.

John 6:30

³⁰ Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?"

This is unbelievable, these people have seen one of the greatest miracles just the day before and they are still looking for a sign, another miracle. This teaches us that faith does not come from seeing miracles but only from hearing God's word. If a person has heard God's word and doesn't believe it they will not come to believe by seeing miracles either. There were people who saw Jesus miracles, even Jesus raising people from death back to life who still did not believe.

Jesus said about the Jewish leaders especially "This evil and adulterous generation seek a sign but no sign will be given them except the sign of the prophet Jonah. As Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights so will the Son of Man be buried in the earth."

Unfortunately many people and even in some churches signs and miracles are emphasized so much that many people make the mistake of thinking faith can come through seeing a miracle. A friend of mine who is an evangelist and has a good sense of humour says about this as a joke. "I believe in signs and wonders. If I don't see signs I begin to wonder." That is funny but it is the opposite of true faith which is believing without seeing visible evidence.

Luke 16:31

³¹ But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'

Jesus taught this important truth through a story about two men in the afterlife. The rich man requested that somebody be sent to warn his five brothers before they die and come into the same torment. The answer given was they have God's word in the Bible and if they don't listen to that then they won't believe even if somebody came back from the dead.

John 20:29

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed."

Jesus said "Blessed are those who have not seen and believed." When Jesus says you are blessed it doesn't just mean you are happy, it means you are blessed by God with the forgiveness of all sins, and given every spiritual blessing in Heavenly places. Thomas wanted to believe but found it hard to believe. Jesus came especially just for him and gave him the full assurance of faith. He will do the same for all who want to believe in Him and ask Him to be their Saviour. This is a clear example of Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith. So for any who feel like Thomas did that they can't believe don't hesitate to receive Jesus and confess Him with your mouth. He will come to you personally and show Himself personally to you not physically as He did for Thomas but in your heart and give you the full assurance of faith. That is why He said to Thomas "Blessed are those who have not seen but believed."

(Use testimony of myself being like Thomas). I was born and grew up in a place of political conflict. When I was 20 years old I was serving as a political prisoner when I saw the movie Ben Hurr on a tv broadcast. I was watching the crucifixion scene of Jesus which I had heard about many times when I was a child because my parents were Christians. When I was a child I could not understand how Jesus died for my sins but watching

it in the movie suddenly I saw that it was for my sin. I saw that my sin together with the sins of the world nailed God's Son Jesus to that cross. Suddenly, I felt that I wanted to be a follower of Jesus and not live anymore for my own pleasure but live for Him who died for me. The next day after thinking about it all night I said a simple prayer. " Lord Jesus, forgive my sin and come into my heart and be my Saviour." At first I had no assurance of because I didn't know how Jesus could come into my heart. I started reading the Bible everyday in John's Gospel and the first help I found was in V6:37 "All who the Father gives me will come to me and him who comes to me I will not cast out." It was a very anxious time for me because other men who knew me saw me reading the Bible everyday and asked me if I had become a Christian? I said yes , but in my heart I was wondering if I am really a Christian because I had no assurance of faith. I continued reading the Bible everyday for two weeks and seeking something to give me assurance of faith. Then I was reading Galatians 2:20 where it says "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I but Christ lives in me. The life that I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." Suddenly, Jesus came to me personally and opened the eyes of my heart to see that He is really alive and that He is living in my heart. He gave me the full assurance of faith and I knew for the first time in my life the overflowing joy and peace of being forgiven for all my sin." Just like Thomas I could not believe at first even although I wanted to, I am also a twin like Thomas so we have two things in common. Jesus knows our hearts and if we want to believe and do whatever we can to seek Him He still comes with a personal revelation to give us the full assurance of faith like He did for Thomas and for me and for everyone who seeks Him.

3) Believing Before Understanding.

John 6:57-60.

⁵⁷ As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."

⁵⁹ These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

⁶⁰ Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"

Many went back and walked with Jesus no more because they could not understand His words. This doesn't mean they lost their faith but they could not progress into a deeper relationship with Him because they refused to follow Him where they could not understand what He was doing.

Peter and the other 11 disciples also did not understand what Jesus was teaching at this time. They knew only one thing about who Jesus is and later came to understand the other things at the last supper. The spiritual meaning of eating His flesh and drinking His blood in the communion service. It's a common mistake to think we can understand God's eternal truth before believing and obeying Him.

Proverbs 3:5-6.

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

This is how we can fill Jesus' heart with joy, by obeying Him even when we don't fully understand what He is doing. There is only one place in the Bible where it says Jesus was especially filled with joy to overflowing. Of course He was always filled with the Holy Spirit so always had joy in doing His Father's will but only once it says it so clearly.

Luke 10:21.

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, Father I thank you that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. Even so Father because this was pleasing in your sight."

What was the timing this happened? it was when the seventy disciples He had sent out to the towns and villages came back rejoicing at the power they had experienced in His name. Also what was it Jesus was rejoicing so much about? It was that babes as Jesus called them, were experiencing revelation of the things of God. They were all grown up people but they had humbly obeyed Him like little children. The thing that most filled Jesus with joy is that His Father alone was getting all the glory. The way that God works is a great equalizer and leaves no room for pride in human ability. Everybody regardless of how much ability they have can experience revelation of God's truth. The greatest genius in the world is blind to God's truth until he believes and obeys Jesus' words. The key to spiritual understanding is not academic ability but humble obedience.

Faith gives us assurance of eternal truth that can never be academically or scientifically proven, including the creation of the world and the meaning of our own existence. God's truth in the Bible is not opposed to science but is much higher than science which depends on human ability.

Peter in this confession of faith is saying what every true Christian can say, "we have come to believe and know you are the Christ" The order is important. We believe first then we come to know with assurance later. This statement by Peter is very similar to the one in Matthew 16:16-17. Jesus said to Peter then "Blessed are you because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father who is in Heaven." As long as we know who Jesus is we are blessed in the same way as Peter because nobody can know who Jesus is except God has revealed it to them personally.

Conclusion.

1st Corinthians 1:22-24

²² For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Jesus becomes for us God's power to change our hearts, especially from unbelief to faith, and He becomes God's wisdom to us to understand God's truth. V29 "That no flesh should glory in His presence."
Let's finish by going back to John 6:37. One of the most wonderful promises given by Jesus.

³⁷All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

Anyone who desires to become a follower of Jesus can be sure even if you don't understand many things or feel you still can't believe, you can be sure He will accept you as you are.