

The Faith Life

Faith Life

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Okay, welcome tonight for our study of faith. Faith is crucial to the Christian life. A couple of verses I can show you to prop that up. One is found over in Romans, over in Romans 14:23 where Paul writing to the church at Rome says in the last part of that verse, "and whatever is not from faith is sin." Whatever. Anything that does not come out of a faith position, a faith stance in the Christian's life, it is sin. And then the second example is found over in Hebrews 11, that great chapter on the faith and faithful, the only place we have in Scripture where faith is actually defined, but in this chapter on faith we read in verse 6, "And 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 seek Him." It's impossible to please God without faith and so faith is crucial, it is vital to the Christian life. Can you become a Christian without faith? No. Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Jesus said, "Whatever you shall ask believing you shall receive."

The Christian life is a life of faith and yet I'm convinced that too many Christians don't understand what faith is. I mean, you'll be watching tv and people's advice, "You've just got to have faith." That's right, faith in what? It's no better than its object, is it? So tonight as we study, where we're going to start off is at the very basics and it will all come together starting at the ground level and we're going to be working our way up into the deeper things in these weeks ahead.

First, we need to understand there are two worlds. There is a physical world that we know all about because we're born into this physical world. We have five senses that God's given us to help us to relate to this physical world: your touch, your smell, your sight, your taste. But there's another world, and you hear it, and there's another world, the spiritual world. Now over in 2 Corinthians 4 and the Scripture bears testimony to the reality of these two different worlds in many places. 2 Corinthians 4 in verse 18 Paul says, and we begin in verse 17, he says, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, for while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Now if you don't understand the reality of these two different worlds, you won't understand this passage at all. The

things that are seen are the physical realities that we relate to every day on the physical plane. The things that are unseen are the things of the spiritual world, that world that we cannot see with these physical eyes, nor can we taste, nor can we hear with our physical senses. Nevertheless, it says that the afflictions that we are experiencing in this physical world can actually have spiritual effects because they cause us to realize that the physical world is just that temporal, it's going to pass away, but the spiritual world is eternal, it's going to always be here.

So when we go through hardships and difficulties and hard times, it makes you realize, "You know, this old body is breaking down." Or something gets taken away from us, a house burns down, "You know, I can lose those things, those things are temporal but there's a reality that's eternal that I cannot lose, it cannot be taken away from me." And you know, you've got to let go of the physical if you're going to take hold of the spiritual. You see, the more you're hooked in and tied into the physical world, the less you're going to be able to be connected and tied into the spiritual world. We allow the physical world to crowd out our understanding and comprehension and enjoyment of the spiritual world. So when the physical world is taken away from us because of some hardship or difficulty, that reminds us and it causes us to lean more on the spiritual, on God, and that produces for us an eternal weight of glory above all comparison.

Another example is found over in John 3 when Jesus was talking to Nicodemus. Jesus brings into that conversation the reality of these two worlds. In John 3, Jesus begins speaking to Nicodemus in verse 3, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now do you see that word "again"? A better translation of that word "again" is "above." Above. Jesus is saying unless one is born from above he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Unless one is born from the spiritual world, born into the spiritual world, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

James over in a passage that you are familiar with in James 1:17, the same exact word is used that's translated "again" in John 3. In James 1:17, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above," that's the exact same word that the translators translate "again" in John 3. What does it mean? "Coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." What does it mean "perfect give is from above"? Does it mean from up in the sky? Above meaning from God, from the spiritual realm, right? Every perfect gift comes from above from God who is in the spiritual realm, all right? Same word. Unless you are born from above you shall not enter into the kingdom of God.

James also in chapter 3 of his letter contrasts human physical wisdom, the wisdom of this world to the wisdom of the spiritual world in chapter 3, verses 15 through 17. Now listen, "This wisdom is not that which comes down from above," from the spiritual realm, "but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above, " the wisdom that is rooted and originates in the spiritual realm, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy." So there is clearly a physical world and there is a spiritual world that exist simultaneously.

Look over in Hebrews 8. The writer of Hebrews even picks up on the truth that when God told Moses how to build the tabernacle, remember that in Exodus? He told him to build it a special way and he gave him detailed instructions of exactly the dimensions of it, the materials that were to be used, the utensils that were to be put in it, and God gave him all those details for a specific purpose because it was to be a copy of the tabernacle in the spiritual realm, the tabernacle in heaven. Hebrews 8, beginning in verse 1. The writer of Hebrews is referring to these two things. "Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Now is that a physical throne or is that a spiritual throne? Spiritual. He's talking about the heavenlies. He's seated with God in the heavenlies.

"A minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." Now is he talking about a spiritual tabernacle or the physical tabernacle? Spiritual because he says the Lord pitched it. Man pitched the physical tabernacle but it was a copy of the one in heaven.

Verse 3, "For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer." If the ones on earth offered gifts and sacrifices, it was also necessary that Jesus as he entered into the heavenly sanctuary offered gifts and offerings.

"Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law." Jesus couldn't be a priest in the earthly tabernacle. Do you know why? He was not a Levite. Remember, the Levites were the priests, sons of Aaron. He wasn't a Levite. He was from which tribe? Judah. So in order to get around that what did they do? Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, you see, which is greater because Abraham offered tithes and offerings to Melchizedek. So Jesus is a greater high priest not after the order of Aaron who came from Abraham but Melchizedek.

All right, now let's continue. Verse 5, shall not those earthly priests, "who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." The earthly tabernacle was but a shadow of the heavenly tabernacle. God gives us physical realities to help us understand spiritual realities. Because we are in this physical world and we are physical creatures and we have physical senses, God knows that we have difficulty understanding spiritual realities. We want to see stuff. So I'm convinced when he created the physical world, and by the way which came first, the spiritual or the physical? Which is more real, the physical or the spiritual? Wait, I didn't get too much... Which is more real, the physical or spiritual world? Spiritual. The spiritual world is more real than this platform right here. It is more real. What's going to happen to heaven and earth one day? It's going to pass away but the word of God... Jesus said, "My words are spirit and life." That's why they're going to last forever, Miss Sue, because it's spirit.

All right, so the physical world is there to help us understand the spiritual world. I'm convinced of it. When God created the physical world, he did so many times so that it

would help us. When he created human beings to start off as babies and take all that involved in being a baby and growing and having to eat and drink milk and all that, he wanted us to understand spiritual birth and how we start off as spiritual babies, and how just like it takes time to grow physically mature it takes time to grow into spiritual maturity. And just like we have to feed our physical bodies, we have to feed our spiritual bodies, right? And he did all that to help us see that. And so when we see physical realities that point to spiritual realities we need to take note. The physical tabernacle was to help them understand the reality of the spiritual tabernacle which was in heaven which the writer is talking about at this point.

"Who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, 'See,' He says, 'that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.' But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry," talking about Jesus now, "by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant," that is, a new covenant, "which has been enacted on better promises." Again, he's simply saying what I said earlier, "Moses, make it just like I tell you because it's representative of a tabernacle in heaven."

Now look in chapter 9 of the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 9:23 and 24, "Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with much better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." That earthly tabernacle, those earthly priests going in and offering those sacrifices were just a copy, a shadow of the real, the spiritual that was going to come. And the writer of Hebrews is making the point throughout this book how Christ is superior to Moses and superior to the angels, and the new covenant is superior to the old covenant, and in carrying through with this thought he says, "Look, the tabernacle in heaven, the new covenant tabernacle is superior to the old covenant tabernacle because it was just a copy, it was just a shadow. The one in heaven is the real. The high priest was just a shadow, a copy, of the true High Priest who is Jesus Christ. The sacrifices of bulls and goats in the old covenant were just a shadow, they were just a copy of the real sacrifice who was going to be Jesus Christ himself." And so everything about the new covenant is better than the old covenant because it represents the true, the real, the fulfillment of what was only hinted at in the Old Testament.

So we need just from the outset understand everything about faith hinges on you understanding these realities that there are two spheres, there are two worlds, the physical world, the spiritual world. The spiritual world is actually more real than the physical world. God is spirit. "In the beginning God created the heavens," and I believe by "heavens" he meant the spiritual realities, the angels, "and the earth." God is spirit. All that is he created, therefore the spiritual world is more powerful than the physical world. The spiritual world can change the physical world and that's what happens when you

have a miracle, you release the power of God into your human situation and that's a miracle, and we'll be talking about those and seeing them in Scripture as well.

Now the problem that you and I should immediately realize is that you and I are geared toward the physical world. We are creatures of the physical world. From the moment you are born, you are beginning to relate to the physical world. A newborn baby begins to relate to the physical world. It has been shown that a newborn baby will look toward the voice of his mother because as he is in utero, ears develop in the last couple of months and he hears momma talk, he feels momma walk and looks for that voice. They are relating, we begin relating. Children go through so many learning experiences in those early years that it would boggle our mind. Every time that kid is reaching out, that baby is reaching out and touching stuff, and you know how they love to stare, they're taking in stuff, they're learning stuff. All of that is learning the environment because we're related to that physical world. Well, the problem is we get so used to looking at the physical world that we begin to think it's more real than the spiritual world and we tend to make choices according to what we see in the physical world, not according to what God says is true in the spiritual world, okay?

And I can just give you a prime example I gave a couple of weeks ago in a sermon. The spiritual world says that all the ways of the Lord are kind. Now when people go through losses, lose jobs, find out they've got cancer, all these things that the physical world is saying to you, "God's mean," you've got to fight that urge to look at the physical world and you've got to say, "No, I don't care what the physical says, the spiritual is more real and God says He is kind in all His ways." Now that means I'm just not looking at it right. I'm not seeing the kindness of the Lord in this situation. It's a lot easier to see the hand of God in your situation than it is to see the heart of God in your situation but that's where we've got to get to seeing his heart and then we'll realize that, indeed, he is kind.

Sometimes faith is not humanly reasonable. Look over in Romans 4. Now was it humanly reasonable that 100 year old man and a 90 year old woman would have a child? Now does that defy human reason? Yes. Yes. What did Sarah do when listening behind the tent? She laughed. It's so ridiculous she laughed. She laughed because it was just so outlandish. She couldn't believe it. And of course, Isaac means "laughter." God came back and said, "Okay, you're going to name him Isaac now because you laughed." A reminder of her lack of faith every time she called his name.

All right, Romans 4:19, "Without becoming weak in faith," and he's talking about Abraham, "he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead," he wasn't Strom Thurmond, was he? He was about 100 years old so he looked at the deadness of his body, all right, how old he was, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. Sarah had long since gone through the change, folks. Barren as they come. Dead as dead can be. Abraham saw this, he saw the physical world, he saw how unreasonable and impossible it looked in the physical world, but he chose, and there's always a choice, he chose to believe the spiritual world, the truth of the spiritual world over what he saw in the physical world. So verse 20 says, "yet, with respect to the promise of God," that they would have a son by this time next year, "he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and

being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform." He knew God was more powerful than the physical world. He knew that God could change the physical world and take the deadness of his body and the deadness of Sarah's womb and bring life. He believed it and therefore he moved out in faith, "Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness."

Faith is acting like a thing is so because God says it is so, even when it doesn't appear to be so, in order for God to make it so. Now you need to memorize that. Faith is acting like it is so, acting like Sarah's going to get pregnant – now don't forget this next part because some of the people that are teaching on faith nowadays are teaching error because they're leaving out this part – because God said it is so. You can't just say I'm going to believe anything and have anything I want. You can only believe what God tells you is true. You and I don't know many times what God's will in the physical world is until we check in with him in the spiritual world, and until we get a word from God we don't know how to believe and we don't have the faith to believe to see the physical world change. But faith is acting like a thing is so, acting like Sarah can get pregnant, will get pregnant, because God said she would get pregnant even though it didn't look like she could in order for her to become pregnant, okay? That's what faith is all about.

What about Jericho? Do you remember Joshua? He went up to survey Jericho, do you remember that, and this angel appeared to him and he was afraid. You know, he said, "Are you an enemy or are you a friend or foe?" He didn't know who that was and the Lord Jesus was who it was. He said, "I'm the Captain of the Lord's host." Now Joshua had looked down on Jericho and do you know what he saw? He saw a city, the Scripture says it was shut up tight, that means it was impenetrable. The walls were massive. There was absolutely no human way that band of Israelites with swords and spears and arrows could break down those massive walls that surrounded that city. And Joshua was looking at that, seeing that and then Jesus appears to him and Jesus tells him something.

Look over in Joshua 6. Joshua had the physical world staring him in the face. Now faith doesn't ignore the physical world, you realize it's there. You don't ignore it. You don't pretend it's not there. You look at it straight on but you don't stop there, you move on and look at the spiritual world and see what God has to say. So here he is, chapter 5 beginning in verse 13, "Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries?'" "Are you friend or are you foe?" He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." The host of the Lord is his mighty angelic army. And Joshua realizing now this is Jesus, he fell down "on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, 'What has my lord to say to his servant?'" He was saying, "God, tell me what's going on in the spiritual world here. I can see what's going on in the physical and it doesn't look good. You tell me what's going on in the spiritual." "The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so. Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel... The LORD said to Joshua, 'See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors.'" See. Now what did Joshua see when he looked at

Jericho? He saw a massive city locked up tight but God said, "See, I'll give it to you. You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout," and that was a shout of victory, the hallelujah shout, "and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."

Shout victory even when the walls are still standing. Faith is acting like a thing is so, like the walls are going to fall even when the walls don't look like they're going to fall because God said they were going to fall in order for them to fall. Now can't you imagine what the Generals thought when Joshua went back and said, "Guys, I've got a plan here. This is how we're going to take it, we're going to march around that city each day for six days and then on the seventh day we're going to march around seven times and then we're going to blow the trumpets and we're going to shout and the walls are going to come tumbling down." I would love to have been there when he told those Generals that story. I'd love to have been there.

Now let me tell you something: when God gives you a word of what he's going to do, don't expect other people to get on it. Unless he gives them a word it's hard for them to get on your word because, see, when God speaks it he gives you the faith with it. But sometimes you've just got to say, "Well, I don't see it but if you say it I trust you. Let's go with it. Let's go with it."

So that's what they did. They obeyed God. Faith is always active. Faith is doing. It's acting like a thing is so because God said it is so even when it doesn't appear to be so in order for it to become so. And that's exactly what happened in the walls of Jericho. Now if Joshua had not gone and obeyed God, he would not have seen the power of the spiritual world invade the physical world and bring about a miracle. But as he acted in faith, it released the power of God into the human situation. Do you remember what Jesus said, I think it was when he was with Nazareth, the Scripture says he could not do many miracles here because of their unbelief. Unbelief. Unbelief. There is a connection between the power of God and faith. He could not do many miracles because of their unbelief.

Faith is crucial to the Christian life. Next week, Lord willing, we will pick up and we will see more examples of this truth because it is crucial that you understand there's a physical world, there's a spiritual world. The spiritual world is more real. We need to see what God wants to do in the spiritual world so that we'll know his will in the physical world. And then faith is acting on what God says, not on what you see in the physical world. That's why the righteous shall walk by faith not sight, not what they see, you see? That's what faith's all about, believing God over what you see in this world.

All right, that brings us to the conclusion tonight and I wanted Paul to come and just have a few moments for us to take some prayer requests.