

# Faith: What Is It?

*Faith Life*

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All right, good to be back tonight to get through the tornadoes and all the weather as we continue our study of the faith life. Last week, we looked at the reality that there are two worlds, there's a physical world and we all are well aware of that, we see it all around us, but there is a spiritual world that is more real than the physical world that we can see, and our conflict arises when we put more stock in this physical world than we do the spiritual world. God is spirit, his truth is spirit and life, and we have to put his word and his truth above what these eyes tell us is going on, and faith is all about tapping into God's power in the spiritual realm and seeing it invade the physical realm. That's what a miracle is, it's when God invades the physical realm and the spiritual world transforms or changes the spiritual realm.

And we've been looking at some examples in Scripture of this and take your Bibles and turn over to Luke 5 and we'll look at a few more examples tonight because it is crucial that we understand this basic truth that faith is acting like something is so because God has said it is so, even when it doesn't appear to be so in the physical world in order for God to make it so in the physical world. Now you need to keep that in your mind and I'm going to keep on saying that because you need to be able to say it if I wake you up at 3 in the morning. You need to be able to say that faith is acting like a thing is so because God said it's so, even when it doesn't appear to be so, in order for it to be so. All right, and that's what we're seeing in all these examples.

Luke 5. Here we have Peter, he's been fishing all night, he's caught absolutely nothing. Nighttime was the time to fish, so logical human reason would say you didn't catch anything all night, you're surely not going to catch anything during the day. You need to put your nets out, you need to let them dry out so you can go out again the next night and hopefully catch something. But Jesus looked into the spiritual realm and saw what the Father was up to and he told Peter to go out for a catch. Let's look at the Scriptures there. Luke 5, "Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let

down your nets for a catch.'" Now he didn't say, "Let's go back out and see if you can catch something this time." He said, "Go out, put down your nets for a catch. You're going to catch something because I've looked into heaven, I've seen the will of the Father," and you know the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus looked in heaven to see what the will of God was for the situation on earth and then he declared it, he spoke the word, and then Peter had to step out in faith, okay?

Now you say, "Well, preacher, it doesn't say anywhere Jesus checked in with the Father. Why do you say that?" Because Jesus said he didn't do anything without checking in with the Father, right? John 5. He said, "I can do nothing on My own initiative. I do nothing but what I see the Father doing. I say nothing but what I hear the Father saying." So when Jesus says it, I know he's checked into heaven to see what the will of the Father is and that is so crucially important. The false faith teachers leave that step out and they would say act like a thing is so because you want it to be so, in order to make it so. No, you've got to check in with heaven and see what God's will is. God is not in the business of being a heavenly Santa Claus and just granting us anything we want. It's not his job just to sit up there and we say, "Well, I just believe God's gonna give me a brand new car. I'm gonna even tell Him what kind it is." No, your job is to be a servant of the King. A servant follows the orders of the King. You check in with the King and find out what the King's will is, then you know what to do and you know what to believe.

So Jesus says, "'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing,' all right, so he can't help but look with these eyes and there's nothing wrong with looking at your situation realistically from the human perspective. You know, you don't deny that you've got cancer if the doctor says you've got cancer. You don't go around saying, 'I don't have it. I don't have it. I don't have it. I'm not gonna give that negative confession.'" No, the medical tests show you've got cancer, you say, "I've got cancer and now I'm gonna find out what God's will is in this situation." You've got financial problems, you don't go around saying you don't have financial problems because you do, but you need to find out what God says about those financial problems so you'll know what to do, all right? Are we straight on that?

So Peter said, "Look, look, we went all night and we didn't catch a thing." That's the human reality of it, "but, but," he says, "at Your word I will do it, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." You see, Peter had to make a choice to either believe God, believe what Jesus said the will of the Father was, or to believe what his eyes and experience were saying. That's the fight of faith because what we're seeing in the physical world is telling us that what we have heard God say in the spiritual world is not so. We see a difference, we see a discrepancy, and then you have to make a choice, "Am I going to believe God and His word or am I going to believe what I see? Am I going to believe these five senses and what they're telling me?" And as I said last week, we are geared toward the five senses because as soon as we're born into this world we start relating to this world according to our senses. We grow up doing it. We're taught in school to relate to the world according to our five senses, to look at things analytically and determine them and look at everything according to what we can see and what can we touch and

how we can figure it, all the quantitative, but God is spirit and he cannot be measured and anyone who tries to find God through quantitative analysis will never find him because he's spirit. Now we don't deny quantitative facts but we don't stop there either, we go past them. We realize they are limited and they're not the final word but the final word is what God says his will is because the spiritual, remember, is more real than the physical.

Verse 6, he chose to believe God so he went out, acted like he was going to catch fish even though everything in the human realm said you will not catch fish, but God said he would catch fish and so he acted like he would catch fish and he caught fish. Do you see it? Faith is acting like a thing is so, you're going to catch fish, because God said it's so even when it doesn't appear to be so, hadn't caught any all night, didn't have any reason humanly speaking to think he'd catch any now, but he acted in faith and that moved the power of the spiritual realm into the physical and a miracle took place. "When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break." Peter could have tried to figure out all day how God was going to work but he could have never figured it out. He would have never thought there was going to be so many fish he couldn't even get them all in his own boat, he had to get help.

You cannot out-figure God. It's not for us to figure out how God's going to do something. You see, we want to figure out the "how" and we get all tied up trying to say, "Well, how's God gonna do that? I just don't see any way God can do that. I just can't imagine it." Well, I've learned a long time ago don't try to figure out God because he won't work the way you think he's going to work anyway. He just works ways you can't imagine that he'll work and then you look back and think, "I'd have never thought but He does it."

"But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!' For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken." You see, when you walk out in faith and God works, you see the power of God and that draws you closer to him and you come to know him in ever deeper, greater ways. Do you think Peter and those fishermen were ever the same after that day? No. They were changed. They entered into true worship when they bowed down before him and proclaimed him. "Get away from me, Lord, I'm a sinful man." And when you ever enter into true worship, you never come away the same, you're always changed. All right?

Another example is over in John 11 when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. John 11. John 11, you remember Lazarus was very sick and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus that, "Behold, the one that You love is sick." Now they were thinking Jesus would immediately drop everything he's doing and head out to help, right? That's why they sent word seeing they had it figured out how Jesus was going to work. "If we can just get to Jesus, we know He loves us and we've seen Him heal, we know He can heal. If we can just get to Jesus, He'll come and heal and everything will be all right." And right the time they thought they had him figured out, verse 4, "But when Jesus heard this, He said, 'This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.'" Now how did Jesus know that this sickness was not going to end

up in death? How did he know? He checked into heaven. He checked in with the Father and he saw what the Father's will was.

Verse 6, "So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?'" Jesus had already looked to the Father and he knew the Father's will so he wasn't worried about getting stoned. What did he say? "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.' This He said, and after that He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.' The disciples then said to Him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.'" I mean, after all they'd heard Jesus say this sickness is not to death, didn't they? So they said, "He'll wake up." "So Jesus then said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead.'"

Now you're one of the disciples, you've been involved in this situation, you've heard Mary and Martha come and say that Lazarus was very sick, you heard Jesus say the sickness is not to result in death, right, but that God would be glorified, and then lo and behold two days later Jesus says, "Well, he's dead, guys." What are you going to think? "I thought You said it wasn't going to end in death, Jesus?" You see, when you're walking with God, sometimes it doesn't make sense to you because you try to figure it out. It didn't make sense to those disciples. Jesus said it wasn't going to end in death and now he says he's dead. Have you ever been there? You're just trying to follow what God told you and then it just looks like it doesn't make any sense at all, like it's almost going to just the opposite of what he told you? But you never doubt the light when you're in the darkness. Always go back to the light and keep walking in the light even when it's the darkest.

"And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there," Jesus said, "so that you may believe; but let us go to him." You know he went, Mary comes out or Martha comes out and says, "Jesus, if You'd been here this wouldn't have happened." Martha says basically the same thing, "Jesus, basically You've let us down. You know, if You'd just come in a timely fashion You could have healed him, but now he's dead." And Jesus says to her, he says, "Your brother will rise again." And she said, "Well, I know he will in the resurrection, Jesus. We all know that but we're talking about now." And Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.'"

Well, you know the story. He says, "All right, go roll back the stone now." And what does she say? King James, "He stinketh." Stinketh. "He's been dead long enough it's not going to be a pleasant thing to roll back the stone now, Jesus." But Jesus was acting in faith, see? He saw the Father's will so he said, "Move it aside. Act like he's alive because the Father said he was going to be alive even when he doesn't appear to be alive. Roll back the stone." And what do you say to somebody that's inside there alive? You say,

"Come on out." What did Jesus say to him? "Lazarus, come forth." Jesus was speaking to him like he was alive because the Father told him he was alive even when it didn't appear he was alive, in order for him to experience life, and Lazarus came forth. Faith.

Look over in 1 Kings 17, another example. 1 Kings 17. This is the story of Elijah calling down fire on Mount Carmel and he calls down the fire and shows up the prophets of Baal. Do you remember this? Do you remember that story? Now you may have thought to yourself, "How did he ever come up with that one? Was he just one day just sitting in his quiet time thinking, 'We've got to do something here, Lord, to show these Israelites You are really better and greater than Baal. So I'll tell You what's let do, why don't we challenge them and we'll go up here on the mountain and we'll put an altar to Baal and one to You, and when I call on You to bring down fire why don't You just bring down that fire, man. That'll wake them up.'" But that wasn't what happened because faith never starts with us, where does it start? With God.

And if you'll look over in this passage, we'll pick up in chapter 18, "Now it happened after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, 'Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth.' So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria. Ahab called Obadiah who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly; for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.) Then Ahab said to Obadiah, 'Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle.' So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself. Now as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, 'Is this you, Elijah my master?' He said to him, 'It is I. Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah is here."' Now Elijah had just told him three years earlier there wasn't going to be a drop of rain except by his word. Now again, the Lord had told him that. He didn't just come up with that idea on his own. The Lord spoke it to him.

Well, now he's come back and Obadiah figures Ahab is not going to be real happy to see him, right? Verse 9, "He said, 'What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death?'" You know, kill the messenger. He said, "If I go and tell him you're back, he's going to want to kill me."

"As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to search for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he made the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you. And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah is here."' It will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, that I hid a hundred prophets of the LORD by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water? And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah

is here""; he will then kill me.' Elijah said, 'As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today.' So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, 'Is this you, you troubler of Israel?'" He's blaming the prophet because the prophet simply spoke the word of the Lord that a famine was going to come on the land because of their wickedness that King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had promoted and fostered, and yet he's accusing the preacher of being the meddling troublemaker.

"He said, 'I have not troubled Israel,' amen, "but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals. Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.'" And the story went on and, as you know, God opened up the heavens and he brought down fire and licked up that altar along with the water and everything else when the prophets of Baal cut themselves and just did all sort of things and not one thing happened at their altar. But Elijah was only moving according to the word of the Lord. He didn't say, "Well, this is a good idea. Let's try this." God is not, is not obligated to cover up your stupidity. He is not obligated to work because you say he's going to do something. "Oh, I know God'll heal you." If God hasn't told you that, you don't know and God is not obligated to keep you from looking like a fool either.

That was one of the temptations that Satan put against Jesus. You shall not tempt the Lord your God, tell him to do what he's got to do. "I'm going to jump of this temple and You've got to catch Me, God, because I am the Messiah and I have to live and fulfill Your mission for Me. Therefore if I cast Myself off the pinnacle of the temple, You've got to send angels to take care of Me. You have got to work and do what I want You to do in order to fulfill Your mission in Me." Jesus said, "No, you don't tempt the Lord your God. You don't put Him to the test. You don't tell God how He's got to act. He tells you what you need to do." Now that's all the difference in the world between you going out on your own and deciding what God's going to do and God actually giving you a word and then you step out in faith and saying, "I'm going to believe You, God. I'm going to trust You and I'm going to act like You say it's true because You said it was and watch You work."

Faith, Hebrews 11:1, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Assurance of things hoped for. We always hope for things that are in the future. If you can see it, you don't have to hope for it. Hope in the Scriptures is a confident expectation. Not like we use the word. Assurance of things hoped for. One thing you hope for is heaven, amen? You've never seen heaven, it's a future thing, but you hope for it and I daresay you have the assurance of it so much so that when that time comes that you're about to breathe that last breath you're not going to be afraid because you're going to know heaven awaits.

That's assurance of things hoped for, that Jesus is going to come back. I am convinced, I am assured of that. I live my life today based on that reality that he's going to come back some day and he's going to set up his kingdom some day, that we're going to rule and

reign with him some day. I live today with that in mind. That's assurance. That's faith. You probably have more faith than you realize you have.

When you live today based on things in the future that God has said will happen, that's faith. God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as... And Abraham looked up, saw the stars and what did he do? He believed. And what did God say about it? He reckoned him as righteous. That's faith. He just looked and said, "Yup, I believe You're gonna do it, God. I have the assurance of something in the future." And God said, "You are righteous. You are right with Me through faith." That's all he's ever wanted is for us to believe him. That's all he's ever wanted, "Take Me at My word. Believe Me. I'm trustworthy. And I'll declare you right not because you can do this or do that or prove your worth in doing things, not by works, not by obeying the law but just believing Me, just accepting Me as trustworthy, believing I'm a covenant God and I keep My word."

Assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Faith is intellectual. It has three elements. First, it's an intellectual element. You've got to know something to believe it. It just stands to reason. You can't believe if you don't know the facts. So there is a factual aspect to faith. I believe God can do this, that or whatever. Now the problem is some people don't get past the intellectual and that is not a saving faith. You know, the devil believes Jesus was God's Son. The demons believe Jesus died on the cross. The devil knows he came alive from the dead but the devil doesn't have saving faith. Faith is more than just intellectual knowledge or even intellectual agreement. There's a second element and that is the emotional element of faith. Not only do I believe God can, I want God, I desire for God to do this. And then I think the key element is the volitional, I believe God is doing this. Not only do I believe God can save me, not only do I want God to save me, but I believe God is saving me by his grace.

Somebody gave an illustration one time, I think it's fairly good. I have repeated it and I'll repeat it again. It's like this guy's out fishing on this sandbar in the middle of the river. He's got his boat out there and he's just fishing away and all of a sudden he looks around and he notices that sandbar is getting smaller and smaller. The river is rising. They've been letting water out at the dam up there. Well, he looks around and he realizes his situation is getting precarious, right? He sees his boat, intellectually he says, "I'm in danger but the boat can save me." So he just keeps fishing. Well, the water just keeps coming in on him and the old sandbar is getting smaller and smaller. Finally it's getting until it's lapping the bottom of his boots. Well, he looks at the water and he knows he's in danger and it's getting worse. He looks at the boat and he knows the boat can save him and now he even wants to be saved because the water is getting on up. But is he saved yet? No. He's not going to get saved until he puts his will in action and he steps in the boat. You see, faith is not only intellectual, emotional but volitional. We act. What you truly believe is what you act on, not what you say. Lip service, talk is cheap. It's what you act on is what you truly believe, not what you say you believe.

All right, you see what Peter did. He acted in faith when he went back out and threw the net down into the water. He involved the intellectual, the emotional and the volitional into the situation. In Joshua 6 we talked about last week the walls of Jericho. It wasn't

enough for Joshua to believe God could bring down the walls, it was not enough for him to want God to bring down the walls of Jericho, he had to act in faith and go and march around that city one time for six days and on the seventh day seven times, and then blow the trumpets and shout. He had to follow exactly what God said. That was an act of faith and when he acted in faith he released the power of God into his situation.

Let me give you another example that I like that really points it out over in Joshua 3, and this will be our last example tonight. Joshua 3. In Joshua 3 they are preparing to go into the Promised Land but the Jordan River is in flood stage. Okay, so they've got to get across that Jordan River, all right? We'll pick up in verse 1 of chapter 3. "Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, 'When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.' Then Joshua said to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.' And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, 'Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people.' So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people." All right. "Now the LORD said to Joshua, 'This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, "When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, 'Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.'" Now he checked in with God to see what God was going to do. "Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan. Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe. "It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap.'"

So God said tell those priests to take the ark and start walking into that Jordan River in flood stage and they are to walk like there's a hole in it because I've told them there's going to be a hole in it even when there doesn't appear to be a hole in it so there will be a hole. Now those priests, it didn't open up as they were approaching. It was not until the sole of their foot touched the water's edge that God opened it up. And I don't believe they were going like this either. God said, "Walk like it's got a hole in it because I said it does."

"So when the people set out," 14, "from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, and when those who carried the ark



came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan."

So the priests went, it opened up, they stood right there in the middle while all the people went by on dry land. "Go get stones and let's build a monument here. This is something to remember." So they got stones one for each tribe, they put them there as a monument to remind in future generations what God had done that day. And I don't know what exactly God did. He could have called an avalanche way up the river to make a dam and stop it. But he did it and he did it at the exact moment. Now he had to cause it to happen up there before they put their feet in the water, right, because it took some time for that water to travel and get past where it's dry but that's no feat for God. He knows all. He knows exactly when to cause that water to stop up there so when they put their feet right there it's going to be dry.

Faith is 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. We'll continue, Lord willing, next week.

Let's pray.

*Father, thank You for this night. Thank You that we can study faith and see how important it is to our lives as Christians and sets us apart from the world who cannot have faith because they know not You, the giver of faith. In Jesus' name. Amen.*