

Sunday Morning Message

November 12, 2017

Faith Extinguished

Text for Today's Message – Romans 14

Congregational Reading – Romans 14:21 - 23

Introduction

For the last several messages, we have been studying from the Scripture the subject of faith. We learned that *"faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith is very important for many reasons, but three reasons come to the forefront:

- 1 We cannot be saved, except through faith in Son of God.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

- 2 We cannot please God without it.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

- 3 We cannot possibly abound in the work of the Lord, if we do not have and increase our faith in the Lord.

*"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, **because that your faith groweth exceedingly**, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;"* (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

- 4 Our faith cannot grow apart from the Word of God

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

Perhaps the greatest rebuke that Jesus gave His disciples was when he said, *"O ye of little faith"* (regarding provision, in the boat in the storm, feeding of the 5000). We want to hear Him say, *"great is thy faith"*. In order for our faith to go from little to great it must expand.

Read Romans 14 slowly – verse by verse – commenting along the way.

Introduction

Romans 14:1 & 2 speak of someone who is "weak" in the faith. Romans 14:21 states that someone can be made weak. In Romans 15:1, Paul refers to *"we that are strong"*. We have

already seen in previous messages that faith can be strengthened. Today, we are going to consider some characteristics that will weaken our faith, or extinguish our faith.

Note – You cannot lose your salvation because *“he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ”*; but your faith can weaken to the point where you are no longer living victoriously in the Christian life.

Illustration – Fire Extinguisher Story

A preacher tells of visiting a church in California and finding a stirring red and orange banner on the wall. "Come Holy Spirit. Hallelujah!" it declared in words printed under a picture of a fire burning. However, there was another sign directly underneath the banner which said: "Fire extinguisher." Just as a fire extinguisher will put out a physical fire, there are also some things that will attack the fires of our faith in God.

This morning, as we conclude our study of faith, we will look closely at some things, which are the enemies of faith: characteristics that will weaken faith. Habits that may even cause some to turn back in their Christian walk. However, we do not have to experience this reduction of faith. If we are aware that there are things out there that will attack our faith, we can avoid some of the pitfalls and continue to grow stronger in the Lord each day.

Why is it that many professing Christians do not grow in faith, and some once growing Christians seem to go backwards? It is because they have allowed something to extinguish their faith in God and His Word.

This morning. Let's examine three characteristics (customs or habits) that will work to extinguish or weaken the faith of a Christian.

I Laziness

Illustration – Job Applicant

A personnel manager rejected a job applicant because the firm was overstaffed. But the would-be employee persisted, "The little bit of work I'd do would never be noticed."

"Some people would do anything to be able to do nothing."

Many Christians are downright lazy when it comes to growing in the Lord and increasing faith.

“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

(2 Peter 3:17 & 18)

When we fail to grow we will weaken our faith.

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

A When we do not read the Word of God.

B When we do not study the Word of God.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

C When we do not memorize the Word of God.

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” (Psalm 119:11)

D When we do not attend the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

E When we do not obey the Word of God.

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” (James 1:22 – 25)

II Lust (Sin)

A Lust for the things of this world.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15)

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:2)

B Lust of the Flesh.

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” (James 14:14 – 15)

“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Romans 14:23)

It must therefore also be true that anything that is sin is not of faith. So, sin is the enemy of faith.

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;” (Hebrews 12:15)

2 Discouragement – bogs you down to where you cannot see the victory that God wants to bring. When you get discouraged you will often want to throw in the towel.

3 Fear – most oft repeated commandment in the Bible is “fear not”. Fear in itself is oftentimes a lack of faith. Fear will keep you from trusting in what God says He will do.

4 Pride – elevation of self; lack of dependence on God.

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18)

III Lack of Exercise (Doubt)

“Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man’s power ends.” (George Mueller)

“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:14)

Illustration

If you do not exercise, your muscles will weaken. Often times when people retire, if they are not careful they will weaken because of inactivity. People who go from a job where they are doing a lot of physical activity to a job where they are sitting at a desk will weaken physically if they do not do something to keep in shape.

Spiritually, we need to put into practice the principals that we learn. Oftentimes, in order to do this, we will be leaving our comfort zone and entering into the area where we are depending upon the Lord. If God wants us to do it, we can do it, even if everybody else says we can’t; even if it makes no human sense. Faith is synonymous with trust and God will often call us out onto a spiritual limb, and sometimes he may even call upon us to jump off the limb. The question is, will we trust him?

Humorous Illustration

A man fell off of a cliff, but managed to grab onto a tree limb on the way down. The following conversation ensued:

“Is anyone up there?”

“I am here. I am the Lord. Do you believe me?”

“Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can’t hang on much longer.”

“That’s all right, if you really believe you have nothing to worry about. I will save you. Just let go of the branch.”

A moment of pause then: “Is there anybody else up there?”

Can you trust God when you cannot see the result?

Illustration – The African Impala can leap to a height of ten feet and cover a distance of thirty feet. Yet, these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a three-foot wall. The animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall. Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with faith we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that fear allows to entrap us.

Can you trust him with your money? You must exercise your faith in Him by obeying the stewardship principles found in the Bible.

Can you trust him with your children?

Can you trust him with your marriage?

Can you trust him with your life?

Can you take your hands off of the controls of your own life and let Him control you?

If you cannot do these things, your faith will never grow; it will only continue to weaken.

Conclusion

“Little faith will bring your soul to Heaven; but great faith will bring Heaven to your soul.”

If you and I are going to do the will of God from the heart, we will have to increase our faith. Our faith will have to grow – to expand.

The bottom line is that you and I are either moving forward – growing – in our faith, or we are moving backwards – retreating. You will never just stand still in the faith.

If your faith is going to expand, you cannot be lazy, you must avoid lusting after the sin and the things of this world, and you must be diligent to exercise your faith.