

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

“The Life Of Faith”

INTRODUCTION

- A. The Gospel of the Christ is “the faith” – Jude 3. Those who have obeyed “the faith” have been “faithful to the Lord.” Acts 16:15; Cf. EP 1:1; CO 1:1; etc.
- B. Collectively called “believers” (Acts 2:44; 5:14) and are “the household of the faith” (GA 6:10).
- C. The underlying principle of the Christian’s conduct is “faith.” GA 2:20; Cf. RO 1:16, 17; 2 CO 5:7.
- D. Sadly to say, the “nature” and “crucial importance” of faith in the life of the Christian are often misunderstood.

DISCUSSION

I. THE MEANING OF FAITH.

A. Definitions.

1. Latin *fidere* = to trust. Cf. confide, confidential, fiduciary, fidelity, infidel, infidelity, etc.
2. Three basic ideas are relevant to this study.
 - a. Belief – certainty, conviction – of the truth of a proposition.
 - b. Confidence in a person’s trustworthiness > dependence (trust, reliance) on that person himself.
 - 1) This involves the idea that the object of faith can be counted on to provide what is needed – “a man of faith” is one who trusts God.
 - 2) Real faith is “a conviction practically operative on the character and will and thus opposed to mere intellectual assent to religious truth.” Cf. JA 2:19.
 - c. Fidelity to a trust or commitment > allegiance (loyalty, constancy) > dependability (reliability).
 - 1) This involves the idea that the subject of faith can be counted on to do his duty – “a faithful man” is one who can be trusted by God. (Contrast the characteristics of the fickle or traitorous person.)
 - 2) We are to be “true-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal” (Francis Havergal).
3. The usage of *pistis* (faith) and *pistos* (faithful) in the NT reflects all three concepts.
 - a. Belief – Acts 8:12; RO 10:17.
 - b. Confidence – RO 4:3, 18-22; JA 1:6 > dependence – 1 PE 2:6; 4:19.
 - 1) We can entrust ourselves to God – He is “count-on-able.”
 - 2) Can the Lord entrust Himself to us? JN 2:24.
 - c. Fidelity – 1 CO 4:2; 1 TI 1:12 > allegiance – 1 TH 3:1-5; RE 2:10 > dependability – MT 24:45; 25:21; 2 TI 2:2.
 - 1) We ought to be true to God.
 - 2) Has the Lord been truer to us than we have been to Him? RO 3:3; 2 TI 2:13.

B. Significance.

1. These three components of faith are progressive.
 - a. Belief – intellectual credence – is the important beginning point. HE 11:1, 6; Cf. 2 CO 4:18.
 - b. This grows into Confidence – self-surrendering reliance. PH 4:10-13.
 - c. This grows into Fidelity – unswerving loyalty. 2 TI 4:7-8; cf. EP 1:12-13.
2. Each is based upon solid evidence concerning the character of God Himself.
 - a. He has demonstrated His credibility. NU 23:19; TS 1:1-3.
 - b. He has demonstrated His dependability. RO 8:31-32.

- c. He has demonstrated His worthiness of allegiance. 2 TI 1:8-12.
- 3. We can have faith in God and be faithful to Him because He is a faithful God. 1 CO 1:9; 10:13; 1 TH 5:24; 2 TH 3:3; RE 19:11.

II. FAITH AS A WAY OF LIFE.

A. Confessing faith. MT 10:32, 33.

- 1. The Christian's faith is a confessed faith – one that is continually confessed. 2 CO 9:13; 1 JN 4:15; Cf. MT 26:31-35; LK 22:31-34, 54-62; JN 12:42; TS 1:16.
- 2. The Christian must continue to live on the basis of faith in the saving work of Christ for us. JN 3:16.
 - a. Faith must never be minimized, even in rebuttal of the “faith only” doctrine.
 - b. At conversion and afterwards, Christians are baptized believers.
- 3. Perversions of faith must be avoided.
 - a. Counterfeit faith – MT 7:15; 15:8; 23:27-28; 2 CO 11:13-14.
 - b. Faith in self – PR 16:25; 28:26.
 - c. Self-righteous faith – Job 4:6; LK 18:9.
 - d. Partial faith – 2 CH 25:2.
 - e. Misoriented faith – 1 CO 2:5.
 - f. Skeptical faith – JA 1:6.
 - g. Small faith – MT 14:31.
- 4. Making the “good confession” – 1 TI 6:12 – implies commitment.
 - a. Commitment in the sense of a bona fide (in good faith) pledge.
 - 1) The commitment and trust involved in the marriage relationship well illustrate what must be true to our pledge to the Lord.
 - 2) Our confession must be held fast. HE 3:1, 6, 14; 10:23.
 - b. Commitment in the sense of an entrusting of self to God. MT 10:38-39; 1 PE 2:23; 4:19; Cf. Commitment of money to a bank for safekeeping.

B. Living by faith. GA 2:20; Cf. HB 2:4; RO1:17; GA 3:11.

- 1. To be “in the faith” – 2 CO 13:5 – is also to be “of faith” – GA 3:9. Cf. EP 3:17. Faith is a real factor in the Christian's manner of life.
- 2. Life in Christ is the life of trusting reliance on God.
 - a. Faith in God is closely related to love for God and hope in God. 1 CO 13:13; 1 TH 1:3.
 - 1) Compare HE 11:1 with RO 8:24-25; 1 PE 1:8-9.
 - 2) In EP 1:12, “trust” = elpizo = to hope. Cf. 1 TI 4:10; 5:5.
 - 3) Consider Abraham's faith/hope in RO 4:18-22.
 - b. The person of faith renounces any other means of “security” such as:
 - 1) The flesh – PH 3:3-11.
 - a) In the OT, Israel persistently refused to trust God – but there were notable exceptions. Cf. 2 CH 14:11; 32:7-8.
 - b) Israel's root problem was one of unbelief. HE 4:2; JD 5.
 - 2) Self – 2 CO 1:9.
 - 3) Temporal prosperity. 1 TI 6:17; Cf. Job 31:24-25; MK 10:23-25.
 - c. Instead, he relies totally upon God. PS 40:4; Cf. 2 SA 22:2-4; PS 23:1; 25:2; 36:7; 37:5; 56:4, 11; 118:5-9)
 - 1) Resting in God's dependability. PR 3:5-6, 26; 14:26.
 - 2) Gaining confidence in God's provision for our “sufficiency.” 2 CO 3:4-5; Cf. 1 JN 5:14.
 - a) During the Lord's ministry, those who overcame difficulty in seeking Him out showed trust that He could do whatever needed to be done. MT 8:10; MK 2:3, 5.
 - b) We demonstrate “little faith” when we worry about

- whether God will supply the things we truly need. MT 6:25-34; HE 13:5-6.
- 3) Learning a child-like dependency . MK 9:42.
 - 4) Overcoming fear through faith. MT 14:25-31. Cf. DA 3:16-18; 6:10, 23.
 - 5) Living life “one day at a time.” DT 8:3; MT 6:33-34.
 - 6) Entrusting self to God. Job 19:25-27; 2 TI 1:12.
 - 7) Counting Christ more valuable than life itself. PH 1:21
- d. In God We Trust!
3. Life in Christ is the life of trusting obedience TO God.
- a. The Christian is one who is “obedient to the faith.” Acts 6:7; Cf. RO 1:5; 16:26; Cf. RO 6:11-18; HE 11:6 (cf. 2 CO 5:9); JA 2:14-26.
 1. Trusting obedience. Abraham is a good example of trusting obedience. HE 11:8.
 2. Unreserved obedience. David is a good example. 1 SA 17:26, 40-47.
 - b. Many are the encouraging Biblical examples of those who knew that obeying God requires nothing but what is beneficial, and forbids nothing but what is harmful. Cf. HE 11:1-40; PS 143:8.
- C. Benefiting from faith. RO 15:13.
1. Joy and peace come not from the absence of conflict in life, but from faith’s ability to cope with it.
 2. Also, faith imparts more active benefits:
 - a. Diligence in work. 1 TH 1:3.
 - b. Willingness to sacrifice. HE 11:24-26.
 - c. Strength and courage. EP 6:16.
 - d. Boldness and access with confidence. EP 3:12.
- D. Maintaining faith. RE 2:10.
1. It is not enough to have had faith at one time. The life of faith begun is virtually worthless if is not completed. CO 2:5; HE 6:12.
 2. What happens to one’s initial faith is crucial:
 - a. Growth. MK 9:24; LK 17:5; 2 TH 1:3.
 - b. Testing. JA 1:2-3; 1 PE 1:7.
 - c. Addition to. 2 PE 1:5-11.
 - d. Standing fast. 1 CO 15:1-2; 16:13; 2 CO 1:24.
 3. Faith is essentially forward-looking. Cf. HE 3:6, 14; 10:22-25; 1 PE 1:5, 9.

CONCLUSION

- A. Man’s basic decision is whether to trust his Maker or not. Cf. JE 2:13; 17:5-8.
- B. The Christian’s life of faith will not be disappointed. PH 4:13; 1 PE 2:6.