

Romans

Practical Discussion On Faith

February 08, 2015

- I. Principles, questions, issues, and qualifying conditions related to the practical application of faith to the Christian life.
 - A. A working definition of Christian faith.
 1. Hebrews 11:1 . . . Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
 - a. Faith is the assurance – faith (*reliance on God, His character, power, love and word*) is what assures you or dispels doubt when you are counting on something to happen in the future.
 - b. The word “hope” as it is used here, means a confident trust that what has been promised exists and will come into your possession or will be experienced by you sometime in the future. This is the opposite of hope placed in something that is uncertain but you want it to be true or to come true.
 - c. Faith is the conviction – faith (*reliance on God, His character, power, love and word*) is the unshakable confidence that what is not seen is nonetheless real.
 2. Hebrews 11:6 . . . 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.
 - a. Without a faith, that is, without a reliance on and trust in God, His character, and His ways that dispels doubt in the goodness of God, the commands of God, and rewards of God, you cannot please God – because you will not want to do what pleases God.
 - b. We validate such a reliance on and trust in God, His character, power, love and His words by first of all believing that God exists – in all His varied manifestations, acts, ways, and word, than by believing He rewards those who seek Him – which means seeking Him according to those ways that actually enable us to find Him, and seeking Him according to His requirements or conditions for receiving from Him what He wishes to give us.
 3. Luke 17:5-10 . . . The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" [6] And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you. [7] Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? [8] But will he not say to

him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? [9] He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? [10] So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"

- a. Both examples of faith require something significant from us.
 - b. The mustard seed example speaks of being willing to rely on God and trust in His process for going from a seed to a living plant. The significant requirement here for greater faith is dying as a seed so new life can sprout.
 - c. The slave example speaks of humbly and submissively doing what the master tells you to do until he says you are done. The significant requirement here for greater faith is humbly and submissively enduring to the end regardless of the cost to you.
4. James 2:18, 24, 26 . . . [18] But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." [24] You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. [26] For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.
 - a. For faith to be Christian faith, it must influence our desires, thoughts, words, and deeds in accordance with the will, word, and ways of God.
 5. Therefore, Christian faith that justifies, saves, and empowers us for daily living is the assent of the mind, submission of the will, and reliance on the existence, character, power, love and Word of God, along with humble and unreserved obedience to the commands of God – plus dependence on Christ's redeeming work.
- B. Right thinking, right values, and right priorities are essential to Christian faith and understanding how to live it in the most practical ways possible.
1. For example, consider Abraham's thinking, values, and priorities when taking Isaac to be sacrificed.
 - a. Abraham believed God's power was greater than the power of death: Hebrews 11:17-19 . . . By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; [18] it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." [19] He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

- b. Abraham put God, God's will, and obeying God over the value of human life, over the value of his son's life, and over the value of his wife's, son's, and servants' opinions of him.
 - c. Therefore, Abraham's thinking about God placed God at the top of his priority, authority, and what is most valuable list, while placing human life, his own happiness, his son's life, a longer life, and approval from others further down the list.
- 2. Another example comes from James 4:2b-3 . . . You do not have because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. Along with this statement about answered and unanswered prayer we have the following scriptures.
 - a. The requirements in these scriptures appear to apply to having our prayers answered. For example:
 - (1) 2 Chronicles 7:14 . . . [If] My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
 - (2) Psalm 145:19-20 . . . He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. [20] The LORD keeps all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.
 - (3) Proverbs 1:28-30 . . . Then they will call on Me, but I will not answer; they will seek Me diligently but they will not find Me, [29] because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD. [30] They would not accept My counsel, they spurned all My reproof.
 - (4) Proverbs 15:29 . . . The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.
 - (5) Matthew 6:5 . . . When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.
 - (6) James 5:16 . . . Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
 - (7) 1 Peter 3:7 . . . You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

- b. To treat the following scriptures as if faith, by itself, is enough to get what we want, we must ignore the previous scriptures about obedience and righteousness impacting prayers being answered.
 - (1) Mark 11:22-24 . . . And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. [23] Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. [24] Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you." (Note: Matthew 21:21-22)
 - (2) John 14:12-14 . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. (Note: John 16:23-24)
- 3. How should our faith and understanding of God be affected when not everyone is healed and when not all children raised in a Christian home end up being Christians themselves? Once again, does God's word provide any other factors that ought to be taken into account? There does not appear to be a clear, solve all our questions answer to this, but the following scriptures add insight.
 - a. James 5:13b-16 . . . Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
 - (1) Deut. 28:15 . . . But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 . . . For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. [30] For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

- b. Proverbs 22:6 . . . Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.
 - (1) Ephesians 6:4 . . . Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 - (2) Colossians 3:21 . . . Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.
 - (3) 1 Corinthians 15:33 . . . Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."
 - (4) Does 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 apply here?
- 4. What does God's faithfulness in response to our faith look like? When are we safe in God's hands and what does it mean to be safe in God's hands.
 - a. How ought we to evaluate God's faithfulness, on a moment by moment or situation by situation basis, or over a longer period of time, and possibly in some cases over a lifetime? Might our evaluation change when seen from an eternal perspective? If so, how so, and what factors might change it? If not, why not?
 - b. Psalm 73:12-14, 16-17 . . . Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. [13] Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; [14] for I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning. [16] When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight [17] until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end.
 - c. Psalm 40:1-3a . . . I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. [2] He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. [3] He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.
- 5. If God is our protector and provider, what is He protecting us from? What about martyrs or those who are falsely accused, imprisoned, tortured, have their possessions confiscated, have to endure family members being mistreated, etc.? What about the ongoing struggle many Christian ministries and missionaries face related to support, obstacles, discord, illness, death?
 - a. We may not be able to provide a complete or even satisfying explanation for what appears to be unjust suffering. However, we know that the combination of the devil and our willful yielding to his temptations brought sin into our world, and with sin came

suffering of every kind. We know that we all have freely chosen sin over righteousness. Therefore, why should any of us be free from sin-induced suffering in this life? In addition, it seems there are three primary directions the answers to this question can go.

b. First, suffering can be accepted on our part and used by God to work a greater good in us and for us individually, and through us for the larger group – whomever that may be.

(1) James 1:2-4 . . . Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. [4] And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

(2) Romans 5:3-5 . . . And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; [4] and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; [5] and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

(3) Consider the outcome of Christians suffering in China under communism.

c. Second, suffering for the sake of the gospel (*evangelism, missionary work, church planting, being a pastor or elder*) is part of joining Christ's suffering in order to bring light into darkness and life where death once ruled.

(1) 1 Peter 4:12-14 . . . Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; [13] but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. [14] If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

(2) 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 . . . For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; [9] indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; [10] who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,

[11] you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

(3) James 5:10-11 . . . As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

(4) Consider Matthew 5:10-12 and 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

d. Suffering can be self-inflicted in that it is a natural outcome of sin and one of the disciplinary responses of God to disobedience.

(1) Galatians 6:7-8 . . . Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. [8] For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

(2) Hebrews 12:7-11 . . . It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? [8] But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. [9] Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? [10] For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. [11] All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

e. If God did not protect us at all, what is the greatest good that we could lose? How do losses of lesser goods compare to losing a greater or the greatest good? (Consider Romans 8:31-39)

C. What does it mean to trust in God as our first and foremost source of security?

1. When we are secure in God, then when tempted to do what is outside God's boundaries of righteousness, we will feel safe enough to remain within those boundaries regardless of the situation or cost of doing what is right.

2. Why should we trust God regardless of what He brings or allows? Who is the wisest one in any situation, God or us? Who sees the beginning and the end, God or us? Who knows what God is doing during and through these times, God or us?
 3. If we believe God is good, how should that influence the way we interpret events (*both good and hard times*) in our life?
- D. Should or can our faith control God? Do we need more faith to get God to act on our behalf and do what we want?
- E. In what ways do we need to live by faith even if we never receive a promise like Abraham or a task like Elijah? Does the basic Christian have to live by the same kind of faith as Abraham?

II. Scriptures Concerning Faith

- A. Psalm 37:16-18 . . . Better is the little of the righteous than the abundance of many wicked. [17] For the arms of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD sustains the righteous. [18] The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their inheritance will be forever.
- B. 2 Peter 1:1-4 . . . Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: [2] Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; [3] seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. [4] For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.
- C. 1 Corinthians 10:13 . . . No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.
- D. Matthew 6:30-33 . . . But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! [31] Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' [32] For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33] But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- E. Romans 8:28 . . . And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
1. Luke 18:28-30 . . . Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You." [29] And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, [30] who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."
- F. Psalm 5:11-12 . . . But let all who take refuge in You be glad, let them ever sing for joy; and may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may exult in You. [12] For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD, You surround him with favor as with a shield.
1. Psalm 34:9-15 . . . O fear the LORD, you His saints; for to those who fear Him there is no want. [10] The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing. [11] Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. [12] Who is the man who desires life and loves length of days that he may see good? [13] Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. [14] Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. [15] The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry.
 2. Proverbs 3:5-12 . . . Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. [6] In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. [7] Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. [8] It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. [9] Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; [10] So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. [11] My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, [12] for whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.
 3. James 4:6 . . . But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
 4. The mindset of the righteous is such that whether God blesses or leaves them in hard times, they still trust in God. Job said it well – Job 13:15 . . . Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.
- G. Philippians 4:18-19 . . . But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleas-

ing to God. [19] And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

1. Luke 6:38 . . . Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.
- H. Hebrews 11:35b-38 . . . others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; [36] and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. [37] They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated [38] (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.
 1. Hebrews 11:6 . . . 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.
 2. Hebrews 11:10 . . . for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
- I. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-8 . . . We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; [4] therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. [5] This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. [6] For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, [7] and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, [8] dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

III. Additional Considerations / Questions

- A. We see deception around us, and we are probably aware of having been self-deceived in areas of our life. How do we validate that our faith is based on God and not our own misunderstanding, personal beliefs, or ...?
- B. Assertions by non-believers: The slipperiness of religious and spiritual beliefs/faith. Not all religious and spiritual beliefs make testable claims.

If things go the believer's way, it's a sign of God's grace and intervention; if they don't, then God moves in mysterious ways, and maybe he has a lesson to teach that we don't understand, and it's not up to us to question his will. No matter what happens, it can be twisted to prove that the belief is right. Faith isn't really any kind of standard that can be tested for reliability.

C. Word / Faith Teaching

1. The only reason you're in want is you don't have enough faith. We can write our own ticket with God if we decide what we want, believe that it's ours, and confess it. Name it, claim it by faith, and it is yours! Your heavenly Father has promised it. Its right there in the Bible.
 - a. Matthew 21:21-22 . . . And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. [22] And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."
 - b. Mark 11:22-24 . . . And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. [23] Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. [24] Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you."
2. Faith teachers believe that fear and negative confessions of words release the power of the devil, whereas faith and positive confessions release the power of God. Yet there is no solid Biblical teaching that we are to treat our words as if they have the power to alter reality.
3. Supporting Scripture used by the Word / Faith teaching:
 - a. Proverbs 18:21 . . . Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.
 - b. Romans 4:17b . . . even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.
 - c. Romans 10:8 . . . The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching.
4. This is a me or right's centered form of Christianity rather than God centered. It is faith in faith, rather than faith in God. And it ignores any conditions or requirements God places on our faith.