

The Christian Life Lesson 2 2Q 2009

Faith

SABBATH

Read first two paragraphs “Faith is not...” – thoughts?

How would you define or describe faith?

In what do you have faith? What is the basis of your faith?

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph – “Now, the question...” thoughts?

Is the lesson suggesting faith is unexplainable, mysterious, it just happens?

If faith is a miracle of God then who is responsible for why some have faith and some don't?

Read first paragraph, “A simple definition...” thoughts? Does this sound like faith is based on evidence of God acting throughout history? Then from where does our faith come? Then is the “miracle” of faith that comes from God, not Him tweaking our brain in some fashion to instill faith, but the miracle of His self revelation throughout history which inspires our faith as we see and know Him?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph “A famous...” thoughts?

Do you think faith is a mystery beyond our comprehension?

Read second paragraph “Clearly, the Scriptures...” thoughts?

Read question four from Friday's lesson: "You don't need faith to believe in what you can prove; you need faith to believe in what you can't prove."

Is the definition of faith you are hearing tending toward enlightening your mind or darkening it? Is it leading you down a path of believing without evidence? How is this definition of faith different from superstition?

Dictionary definition of superstition:

- a belief or notion, not based on reason or knowledge, in or of the ominous significance of a particular thing, circumstance, occurrence, proceeding, or the like.
- a system or collection of such beliefs.
- a custom or act based on such a belief.
- any blindly accepted belief or notion.

Is genuine Christian faith nothing more than superstition? Is genuine Christian faith believing things that are unreasonable, irrational, without evidence, blindly accepted without thinking? Has Satan successfully gotten Christians to exchange faith for superstition?

In the war between Christ and Satan how much truth supports Satan? None, how much supports Christ? 100%, if you were Satan would you want people thinking, reasoning, examining evidence or would you want people to think that true righteousness comes when we stop thinking, stop reasoning, stop examining evidence and just blindly believe?

- 1 Thessalonians 5:21. "Test everything. Hold on to the good." (*NIV*)

How can we test everything if we don't reason, think, weigh evidence? Should we test our faith? Or should we have faith in what we cannot test?

- Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Psalms 34:8

Would tasting mean sampling, gathering evidence, testing to determine?

- **Proverbs 14:15.**
 - "A fool will believe anything; smart people watch their step." (*GNB*)
 - "A simple man believes every word he hears; a clever man understands the need for proof." (*NEB*)
 - "Only a simpleton believes everything he's told! A prudent man understands the need for proof." (*TLB*)

Is our faith in God to be based in claims, proclamation, declarations or evidence that appeals to our reason? One of the founders of our church said:

- God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}
- "God gives sufficient evidence to every soul. He does not promise to remove every doubt, but He gives a reason for faith. And sufficient evidence was given to the Jews." *Review and Herald*, January 24, 1899 (*4RH* 13:2:4); *5BC* 1097(MS 127, 1899)
- "Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character. No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it. Sincerity will never save a soul from the consequences of believing an error. Without sincerity there is no true religion, but sincerity in a false religion will never save a man. I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will

not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach. The Lord does not want us to have a blind credulity, and call that the faith that sanctifies. The truth is the principle that sanctifies, and therefore it becomes us to know what is truth. We must compare spiritual things with spiritual. We must prove all things, but hold fast only that which is good, that which bears the divine credentials, which lays before us the true motives and principles which should prompt us to action." Letter 12, 1890; *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 56

Thoughts? What is the problem with the idea that faith is believing sincerely in something without evidence and doesn't make sense? It damages the mind. It opens us to believe error claiming it as truth.

Examples of what happens to people who have faith without evidence. In other words they don't understand the reasons for what they are doing, they just believe they have to.

- The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely--because he is required to do so--will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}
- A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter

murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. {ST, July 22, 1897}

What leads to sullen submission and or keeping God's commands from mere obligation? Does the man who understands, who has investigated the evidence, whose mind comprehends the truth obey from sullen submission? Or is it the one who has been taught we are to believe without evidence, have faith without understanding, submit without comprehension that ultimately becomes a rebel?

Any examples of this in history? Those who crucified Christ – sullen submission, obedience without understanding – are we in danger of this happening again in our day? Any examples?

Back to the point about proving our faith – can you prove that your mother is trustworthy or that your spouse loves you? Can you know it? How do you know it? Is your knowledge based on claims, proclamations, declarations or evidence?

If a stranger came up to you in the mall and said, “I want you to come with me, no questions, just follow me, have faith, you can trust me.” Would you go? Why not? How about if they said they were a pastor or priest? If a stranger came up to you in college and said, “You are the most beautiful person I have ever met. I love you with all my heart, marry me, you can trust me.” What would you do? Why?

Does God come to us with claims or does He come with evidence of who He is and ask us to get to know Him? And what happens when we get to know Him? We love and trust Him, why? When we love and trust someone based on our experience with them is that blind or enlightened, evidence based trust?

- Has anyone seen the moving the Miracle Worker – about Helen Keller?
 - Helen was deaf, dumb and blind, she lived in a dark world and was wild and out of control

- Annie Sullivan came and began to discipline her – why? Was it punishment? Was Annie angry at Helen for being in such a horrible situation?
- What did Annie want for Helen? Did Annie discipline Helen in order to get “blind obedience”?
- Did Annie want to “enlighten” Helen, to lead her out of darkness and open the world to her?
- Did Helen come to love and trust Annie? Why?
- What does God want for us?
- What do you say about preachers or messages who say that God doesn’t want to enlighten, He doesn’t want us to understand, He doesn’t want us to think or reason or comprehend, we are merely to stay blind and obey?
- If Annie approached Helen with only punishment, threats, pain, intimidation and without enlightenment would Helen have ever loved Annie?
- Teachings which suggest God wants blind obedience are from the enemy of souls, they are designed to keep us in darkness and to destroy love from the heart.

If we have scientific explanations and understanding does that undermine faith? After last week’s lesson I received feedback that some were troubled with the idea that what God does can, over time, through eternity, be understood by His created beings – somehow the fear was that such would undermine faith.

- Our church received a message about healthful living 140 years ago. It was radical for its day. Science didn’t provide evidence to explain the physiological reasons to move away from meat to a plant based diet, to open the windows and breathe fresh air, to exercise, to use fresh water and avoid stimulants, to avoid alcohol and tobacco. Yet, when people began to practice these healthier habits was their evidence in their own lives?
 - Now that science is discovering the underlying physiological reasons why this message was correct

does such understanding undermine your faith or strengthen it?

- What is your faith strengthened in? God, our faith was never in the health message our faith is in God. Likewise throughout our eternal future the more we understand about science, how God does things, the more our faith in Him will grow.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph “In their telling...” thoughts?

When miracles are performed are they generally performed for the strong in faith or for the weak?

- Gideon – why the miracle?
- Elijah and fire – who was the miracle for?
- Jesus’ miracles - who were they for, Jesus or others whose faith was weak?

Why are miracles not a good barometer upon which to base our faith? They can be counterfeited.

Read second paragraph “Our faith...” thoughts?

While specific interventions by God often occur after we have come to a faith relationship with Him, does our faith often precede God’s interventions in our life or is our faith a response to God’s interventions in our life?

The last paragraph states “without faith it is impossible to please God” quoting Heb 11:6.

Why is it impossible to please God without faith? What pleases God? The health, happiness, wellbeing of His children, is it impossible for His children to be healthy, happy, have eternal life without faith? Why?

Imagine a physician who has a child dying of a terminal illness. The child knows he is sick, even that he is dying. He

doesn't fully understand why, but he doesn't feel well. His father, a physician, has a remedy which will cure the child. Does the child have to understand how the remedy works in order to benefit from taking it? Does the child need to trust his father, the doctor, and take the medicine? Is the child's faith in the medicine or in the doctor? Does the child have evidence upon which to base his faith in his father?

Does this analogy have any bearing on what faith is in our relationship with God? Does it give any insight into why we cannot please God without faith?

What can we do to increase our faith?

- Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts?

Feelings are unreliable basis upon which to base our beliefs, faith, decisions – no question about it. But are feelings totally independent of reality or do they react to facts, evidence and reality. i.e. have you ever said, “I have a bad feeling about this.” And then later identified objective reasons you were feeling uneasy?

Does healthy Christian faith press ahead against the evidence? When Christians had faith that the earth was the center of the universe, were they right to deny Galileo's assertion that the earth revolved around the sun? Where does “faith” get balanced, modified, redefined by evidence?

- This is not just some esoteric cognitive exercise – I have patients who have “faith” that taking medication is sin and they are not willing to examine scientific evidence to contradict their faith – is that a healthy approach?

What is a healthy balance to science and faith?

Third paragraph states, “Faith in Jesus will grow as you become better acquainted with Him.” Why? What would cause faith to grow as we get better acquainted with Jesus? Would our faith be based on evidence of His trustworthiness and our “knowledge” of Him?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph – excellently said – our doctrines are primarily there to enlighten us about God – then how do we know if our doctrines are true? Don’t all the denomination believe their doctrines are true, even ones that contradict each other? What tools can we use to help determine which are true and which are not?

- What does this doctrine say about God
- Jesus is an exact representation of the Father, any disparity between the two reveals falsehood in the doctrine
- Understanding God’s universal laws of love and liberty, which are constants we can use to test our doctrines

Read third paragraph, “Sound doctrine...” Excellent, faith is our trust in a person! What is trust in a person based upon? Their trustworthiness, which we know how? Is that evidence based or blind?

FRIDAY

Read top section – thoughts? Are we to understand or believe blindly without understanding? Who is afraid of you turning on your brain and reasoning and thinking through the evidence? The one who has no evidence!

Question 1 read – thoughts? Imagine a doctor with many sick patients who suffer with a variety of symptoms, yet they all

trust the doctor and follow his prescriptions and get well. Why is the doctor not mad at them for their symptoms? How does this apply to Hebrews 11?

Question 3 – thoughts?