



LESSON 37

Foundations Curriculum

Saving Faith, Part 1

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Introduction

The Faith that Saves, Part 1

In this thirty-seventh lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we are going to talk about the faith that saves, what are its characteristics, and how it should be manifested. It is important to understand the saving faith and to know some of the accounts about it that exist in the Bible.

This is in keeping with the need to add a few more topics to the package of teaching that every disciple needs to receive and be formed by.

The subjects of “conviction of sin and faith” have always been implicit in the teaching and preaching we have brought, but now new ingredients about the door of the Kingdom will be added.

You have probably already noticed that both the previous lesson (on conviction of sin) and this message on faith fall under the topic “The Door of the Kingdom.” “The door of the Kingdom of God” consists of the entrance teachings, those things that are proclaimed right at the start. These teachings are: Faith, Conviction of Sin, Repentance, Baptism, and the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

Let us briefly recap:

In the experience Vanjo shared in the previous lesson on conviction of sin, what stood out to you? How can someone be saved without having conviction of sin?

In the same way, a second question is worth asking: how can someone be saved without having faith? These subjects are aligned.

When the people asked Peter, in Acts 2:37, “What shall we do?” it is implied that those people were under strong conviction of sin and were believing Peter's proclamation about Jesus, to the point of doing whatever Peter told them to do. In fact, nearly three thousand people were baptized that very day. They heard, believed, and acted.

Let us move forward!

1) What Is Faith

Faith means to believe, to trust.

Faith in Hebrew means faithfulness, loyalty, firmness, steadfastness.

Faith in Greek means conviction of the truth of something, a conviction or belief concerning man's relationship with God and with divine things, generally including the idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. It is also related to faithfulness and loyalty — that is, the character of someone who can be trusted.

To believe is to be persuaded, to have confidence, to place one's trust, to have faith.

The Word says that without faith it is impossible to please God!

But 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 diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

Do you believe that God exists? The walk with God is a walk of faith. From beginning to end.

2) Five Aspects of a Saving Faith

Faith in Facts

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

Faith is a response we give when we become aware of some fact. We either believe or do not believe what we hear.

The Bible is full of facts. And our faith is based on these narrated facts. The Bible narrates several thousand years of history. And these are stories that many do not believe, mainly because God is present throughout them all. People who do not believe in God try in every way to remove Him from history — to deny Him the credit or the authorship.

The first attempt is to say that God does not exist. They ridicule the stories of the Bible, trying to make those who believe feel inferior, less enlightened — almost as if it were folklore.

They say: Do you really believe in Adam and Eve? That's not possible. As if believing that story were something for children. In other words, they ridicule our faith.

The second attempt is to bring in the opinion of science and try, in some way, to explain the facts of the Bible from an academic or scientific angle. They want to explain that in this or that miracle recorded in the Bible, in the Old or New Testament, there is a scientific factor that proves this or that in a logical (non-miraculous) way.

For example: Moses crossed the Red Sea. There are those who say that, at a certain time of year, a phenomenon occurs in which a certain part of the Red Sea becomes so shallow that it is possible to walk across it. Although their intent is to dispute the miracle, in that case the miracle

would actually be even greater. If we think about it that way, how then did the waters kill Pharaoh's entire army, while not a single person among God's people suffered any harm? Science falls into contradiction here.

The truth is that all the facts written in the Bible are real. The facts that many find hard to believe are precisely those in which God's involvement is present. If we remove these facts, we remove God from history.

Our faith is based on facts. On these facts!

And all these facts recorded in the Bible lead us to three main facts of our faith. Our faith is based on them. These three facts become the main pillars that sustain our faith.

First fact: Jesus died, was buried, and rose again!

Of course, our faith is also based on many other facts about Jesus — His life, His work, and His return. We are presenting these three as the main pillars of our faith.

The apostles were eyewitnesses of the events that took place. And they were so impacted by this that they went out to testify to these facts, and even to die in defense of them.

That testimony has reached us. We believe, and today we are witnesses of these facts too, just as they were. Jesus is alive! Amen! Jesus is alive!

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:1–4 (NKJV)

Here is the center of our faith. In these facts lies the heart of our faith.

Second fact: Faith in a person

Believing in facts alone saves no one. Many people believe all the facts about Jesus. The Bible itself says that even the demons believe — and tremble. So it is not so hard, after all, to have or to recognize Jesus:

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble!

James 2:19 (NKJV)

Here it is worth drawing a distinction between “believing in” and “believing that.”

Believing facts is “believing that.”

A person can believe:

that Jesus existed.

that Jesus performed many miracles.

that Jesus died on the cross.

that He rose again.

But that is not enough. We must believe in Jesus.

Believing in Jesus is placing our trust in Him, in His Word, in His person. It is handing our life over into His hands. It is doing everything He says. It is having Him as Lord of our lives.

A person can believe every fact about Jesus and still not hand their life over into His hands. That would accomplish nothing. It would be having Him as “Savior” or as a blessing, but not as Lord.

For example: imagine that you are a very wealthy person, and that I am going to introduce you to someone who manages finances very well. I tell you all of this person's good qualities — I say that they are a person of great trustworthiness, who manages the money of many rich and famous people. In the end, I ask: Do you believe that everything I have told you about this person is true? You answer: Yes. Then I ask a key question: Do you want to hand over all your wealth into this person's hands, for them to take care of everything for you?

If you hand it over, it is because you believe in the person. You are going to entrust all your wealth into their hands. If you do not hand it over, it is because you do not trust the person, or you do not trust them enough to make that decision. Right?

That's how it is: to believe is to trust. It is to let the person in question (Jesus) take control of everything.

The demons believe the facts about Jesus, but they do not place their trust in Jesus.

Based on the facts, Jesus rose again and is alive!

His tomb is empty. Muhammad did not rise again. Buddha did not rise again. Their tombs are still there, and their bones remained in the tomb. But the tomb of Jesus is empty, because He rose again.

Therefore, we must join our faith in the facts to trust in the person of Jesus. Jesus is alive, and we must begin a relationship with Him.

Third fact: Verbal faith

A person who believes opens their mouth!

Let us think of the blind man of Jericho. He learned that Jesus was passing by. He believed what he was told about Jesus. And what did he do to show his faith? He opened his mouth. He cried out: Son of David, have mercy on me!

Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.” Then Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.”

Luke 18:35–42 (NKJV)

When he calls Jesus “Son of David,” he is recognizing that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior.

And the crowd told him to be quiet. To this he responded by shouting even louder. And Jesus stopped and asked: What do you want Me to do for you? That I may see, he answered. And Jesus healed him and said: Your faith has made you well!

Two ways of expressing verbal faith:

01 Faith to Speak to Jesus

If we believe that He is alive, we must call upon His name in order to be saved. As the blind man of Jericho did, so must we do.

In Peter's sermon, when he preaches the gospel for the first time after Jesus ascended into heaven, he says: *“And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.”* Acts 2:21 (NKJV)

Paul also says this in his letter to the Romans:

For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?

Romans 10:13–14 (NKJV)

When the Holy Spirit reveals to us our true condition as sinners, full of guilt and worthy of condemnation, only one way out remains for us: to call upon the name of Jesus!

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Save me, Lord! Forgive my sins! We must open our mouths toward Jesus.

02 Faith to Speak of Jesus

The rest of the verse we read above in Romans completes what we are saying: “And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” Romans 10:14 (NKJV)

First, because it is an act of faith. Second, because it is an act of obedience.

Another example is the Samaritan woman.

When she had an encounter with Jesus, she immediately went to speak of Him to some acquaintances. She entered the city and spoke of Jesus to everyone.

Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?

John 4:29 (NKJV)

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 10:32–33 (NKJV)

Speaking of Jesus strengthens our faith. Bearing witness of Jesus before others is an exercise that every disciple should practice in order to strengthen their faith.

Jesus called us to be His witnesses.

Fourth aspect: Practical faith

Just as with repentance, faith is accompanied by action. Faith is not only what you think. Faith is what you do.

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

James 2:14 (NKJV)

James is not arguing for salvation by works. He agrees with Paul when Paul says that we are saved by grace, through faith. Salvation continues to be by grace, through faith. It is simply that faith without works is dead. This is how it manifests itself.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

Ephesians 2:8 (NKJV)

The question that arises is: Salvation is through which faith? The faith that saves! True faith! And a true faith is a practical faith — a faith that has works.

The problem is that people think faith is only a mental acceptance. That it is enough to say you believe, and everything is fine. But it is not so. Faith is practical.

If a person's faith produces nothing, that faith does not exist.

We must stop deceiving ourselves and stop thinking that a faith without works can save. Scripture is very clear in saying that such faith cannot save!

Works of faith are actions moved by faith.

James gives us two examples of what he is trying to communicate: Abraham and Rahab.

Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness:

But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

James 2:20–22 (NKJV)

Rahab hid the spies, risking her own life to save those men.

Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

James 2:25 (NKJV)

James cites Abraham and Rahab as examples of faith because they had a practical faith. Their faith produced action. In other words, our faith is made complete by action.

When we read Hebrews chapter 11, we see a great list of people who put their faith into action. And there again are Abraham and Rahab, and many others. But all who are on that list we call

“the heroes of faith” are there not because they moved mountains, healed the sick, raised the dead, and so on. They are part of that list because they obeyed God and gave proof of their faith.

Faith is not accepting the Word of God as true. Faith is acting according to the Word of God. Many people accept the truth of the Bible without acting on it. That has no value.

A WORD OF GUIDANCE

To meditate on: When was the last time you believed in Jesus?

When was the last time you took a risk for Jesus? A risk to your life? A risk of losing a relationship? A risk of losing a job? Losing money?

We live in countries where our faith is almost never tested. We have the basic things we need, easily and naturally. But there are many people around the world who must prove their faith every day.

Proving their faith because of hunger. Proving their faith because of persecution, and so on.

Things could change in Brazil or in the United States. And what will happen if that occurs? Will we deny our faith, or will we put it into practice?

May the Lord be strengthening our faith every day, so that we may remain faithful!

The fifth aspect of saving faith will be addressed in the next lesson. It is a key aspect for our salvation.

CONCLUSION

In this thirty-seventh lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we learned what faith is and became acquainted with the aspects of a saving faith covered so far: facts, a person (Jesus), speaking about Him, and practical works. Someone who believes in Jesus and in the facts about Him is someone who manifests this publicly, drawing others in. They do not keep it to themselves, but obey His commandments, showing that they have truly believed and handed their life over to the government of God.

CONSIDER CAREFULLY

01 What are the four aspects of a saving faith studied so far?

02 Name some of the facts on which our faith is based.

03 Could you explain why faith without works is dead?

*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*

Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)