



LESSON 38

Foundations Curriculum

Saving Faith, Part 2

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Introduction

Saving Faith, Part 2

In this thirty-eighth lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we are going to deal with the fifth aspect of saving faith: its continuity throughout the Christian walk. In the previous lesson, we covered the first four aspects of a saving faith, and now it is important to understand that the faith of our conversion will not guarantee our salvation in the future — for this reason we must persevere to the end. We need to renew our faith every day through obedience and growth in love for the Lord. This is what we will talk about here.

We left the fifth aspect to be addressed separately so that we could explore it more fully. This is an aspect of faith that many, quite possibly, have never heard about.

It is a continuous faith.

Just to recap, in the previous lesson we spoke of faith in facts, which is believing all the facts related to our faith that are recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Especially the facts about Jesus, with His death, burial, and resurrection as the three pillars of our faith.

We also spoke of faith in a person. That is trusting in the person of Jesus, our Master, our Lord. Handing our life over entirely into His hands, giving Him total control of every area of our life.

We spoke of verbal faith, which is expressing faith in Jesus with words. Speaking with Him from the very first moment we believe, calling upon His name and His presence in our lives. Calling upon the forgiveness of sins and the salvation that only He can offer.

An example of this is what the blind man of Jericho did, crying out: “Son of David, have mercy on me!” And from there beginning a relationship with the risen Jesus, speaking with Him every day. And speaking of Jesus to others, bearing witness of His resurrection and that He, Jesus, is our only salvation.

And finally, we spoke of practical faith, which is expressing faith in Jesus through works. It is the obedience of faith that Paul mentions in Romans 1:5. It is the result of our faith. What our faith will produce in our life and through our life.

The fifth topic will now be addressed.

1) Continuing Faith (the Fifth Aspect of Faith)

It is not those who begin with faith who will be saved, but those who finish with faith. What matters most is not how you begin your walk of faith with Jesus, but how you end it. This is directly tied to the walk — to persevering to the end.

Two things are very important and must be addressed here.

01 The Meaning of the Word Faith

The word faith, both in Hebrew and in Greek, is the same word used for faithfulness. To believe is the same as to be faithful.

We can see in the Scriptures how this makes sense. The Lord deals with Israel on this basis at all times — on the basis of its faithfulness.

Israel was either faithful or unfaithful.

The Church is dealt with under the same condition. Either faithful or unfaithful.

The Bible is a collection of books that spans thousands of years. When we bring these books together in chronological order, we can see that God is telling a story. The story of the human race. A story that begins with a marriage (Adam and Eve) and will end with a marriage (Christ and His bride, the Church).

God made a covenant with Israel.

Jesus made a covenant with the Church.

What does this communicate to us? It communicates a relationship of faithfulness, trust, and loyalty.

There are countless prophecies in which God calls Israel unfaithful. He says that Israel prostituted herself, going after other gods. That is why God abhors idolatry. Idolatry is a clear sign of unfaithfulness. Idolatry is betrayal of God.

There are also several parables in which Jesus addresses the theme of faithfulness. In the Gospels, for example, there are several parables about faithfulness.

Read the parable described in Luke 12:35, of the “Watchful Servant”; and Luke 16:1, of the “Unfaithful Steward.”

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants

whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

Luke 12:36–37 (NKJV)

He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’”

Luke 16:1–2 (NKJV)

We cannot separate faith from faithfulness.

Judas was an example of unfaithfulness, of disloyalty, of a traitor.

Jesus is our example of faithfulness, of loyalty. A Man who trusted the Father and was faithful to the end.

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

Revelation 1:4–5 (NKJV)

Again: we cannot separate faith from faithfulness.

02 The Word Faith in the Original

The Hebrew word for faith, as used in the Scriptures, carries the sense of stability, firmness, and trust. In the Greek of the New Testament, there is a single word for both faith and faithfulness. Some Bibles translate the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22 as “faithfulness,” while others translate it as “faith.” When we read texts such as John 3:16 (that whoever believes in Him), the verb to believe (the act of having faith), in its original language, is in the participle form, which functions as a noun. It can mean both “the one who believes” and “the one who is faithful.” This overlap in meaning caused no problem for the ancient mindset, because it was implicit that a believer was faithful, and that someone was faithful because they were a believer.

It is possible to say that the word “faith” and the verb “to believe” express continuous action. To understand this better, we could put it this way:

To keep having faith. To continue to have faith. To persevere in faith. To keep believing. To keep trusting. To remain faithful.

Saving faith is always in the present, never in the past. In other words, it is not because I believed one day, and had a one-time experience of faith, that I have thereby secured a guaranteed salvation regardless of what I do from then on.

Perhaps you are asking yourself: Why, in Abraham's case, is the text in the past tense?

For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Romans 4:3 (NKJV)

Why is Abraham's case in the past tense? Because Abraham has already lived and already died and is no longer in this world. He no longer has any way to give proof of his faith. He already gave it; he already proved it.

But for us, faith must always be present-tense. The faith we exercised yesterday is not enough for today, just as yesterday's food and water cannot sustain us today. Faith is not something we store up or replace with past experiences. We must keep believing. We need faith today, and this faith must continue to grow.

Notice that whenever salvation is spoken of the word is in the future tense. "Shall be saved."

None of us who are alive today have already been saved. We are being saved from the time of our conversion and according to our walk of faith. If we continue believing, if we remain faithful, we will be saved on the last day.

Our faith must be proven every day. That is how we prove our faithfulness to God.

For example:

A person may be faithful to their spouse for twenty years. But if, after twenty years, that person commits adultery, they became unfaithful on that day. The years that passed in faithfulness do not guarantee the future.

Let us take the example of Joseph and Mary:

Joseph was betrothed to Mary and would return shortly to take her, to consummate the marriage between them. But on the day Joseph discovered she was pregnant; he decided to put her away. He would no longer marry her. Why? Because in his mind she had been unfaithful.

Jesus is betrothed to the Church. Just as Mary was the bride of Joseph, the Church is the bride of Christ. He will return to take His bride. And if He finds her unfaithful? Will He marry her anyway? By no means.

The unfaithful will be left outside the marriage supper of the Lamb. It does not matter whether the person once believed. It does not matter whether the person once repented and was baptized. Jesus will come seeking the faithful — those who persevere in their faith to the end.

Let us examine one of the best-known verses in the Bible.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16 (NKJV)

First, we need to know for whom and for what reason John wrote his Gospel, so that we can better understand this text.

The Church uses this Gospel today to evangelize unbelievers, but the Gospel of John was written for the Church. First of all, for the small communities scattered throughout Asia.

The Gospel of John was written in a context in which the Church was undergoing intense persecution, and quite possibly many were on the verge of abandoning the faith. The Gospel of

John was written to strengthen the disciples' faith, to encourage them to continue and persevere. At a time when many brothers and sisters were abandoning their faith in Jesus, John wrote to these brothers and sisters for the purpose of strengthening them in the faith — so that they would not stop believing that Jesus was the Messiah, and that through faith in Jesus they would be saved.

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

John 20:30–31 (NKJV)

We are pointing this out because it helps us interpret the text of John 3:16.

When John affirms that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish but will have eternal life, this was a word of encouragement for the brothers and sisters to continue believing. Remember that many, most likely, were abandoning their faith in Jesus because of the hardships they were facing, because of persecution.

In other words, John was saying: Brothers and sisters, do not give up on the faith. Do not deny your faith. Continue believing. Jesus is the Messiah! He is the Son of God! It is by believing that we will be saved. It is by believing that we will have life in His name! All who believe will not perish, but will have eternal life. You may even lose this life, but you will have eternal life! That is what he wanted to communicate.

Notice that in the text of John 3:16, it says that “God gave His Son” (past tense). So that whoever believes in Him (present tense). It does not say whoever believed in Him.

It is not a moment of faith that saves us or will save us. It is continuing to believe that saves us, that will save us.

Notice what this same John wrote later, in the book of Revelation:

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

Revelation 2:10–11 (NKJV)

It is nearly the same thing he said in John 3:16.

He said it again: “*Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*” Revelation 14:12 (NKJV)

Another well-known text, often quoted in the Church, is Habakkuk 2:4:

Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

Habakkuk 2:4 (NKJV)

This text is quoted three times in the New Testament: in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38.

And always in the same context in which Habakkuk cited it: persevering in the faith, continuing to believe, being faithful.

What was the context of Habakkuk?

Habakkuk is conversing with God about the people of Israel, pressing God to do something to punish the unfaithful. Then God said He would send enemies against Israel to carry it into captivity.

So Habakkuk says to God: But what about the righteous who are there? He acted somewhat as Abraham did before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Remember? Then God answered: Do not worry — the righteous will live by their faith.

We might paraphrase that verse this way: “The faithful will live.”

And the word of God was fulfilled. We know the names of several people who were faithful to God during that period and lived.

Daniel, his friends, Nehemiah, Ezra, and many others. None of these had an easy life, but they were faithful to God and survived. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den and survived. The king himself testifies to Daniel's faith.

So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.”

Daniel 6:16 (NKJV)

And God delivered Daniel from the mouths of the lions.

Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

Daniel 6:23 (NKJV)

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were thrown into the furnace and survived:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Daniel 3:16–18 (NKJV)

That is faithfulness!

If God wants to deliver us, we will be faithful. If He does not want to deliver us, we will remain faithful even to the point of death, but we will not serve any other god.

2) The Faith That Saves Us Is the Faith We Have Today

Jesus wants to save us every day! This faith saves me from the dominion of sin and from the corruption of this world. It saves me from the Devil's slavery. And it will also save me from the second death on the day of judgment.

It is through perseverance that we will overcome. We need to persevere in our faith to the very last day. Continuing to believe to the end!

Consider these words of Jesus, spoken as He described the beginning of sorrows in the last days:

By your patience possess your souls.

Luke 21:19 (NKJV)

Perseverance in faith in Jesus and in His words. Continuing to believe!

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Hebrews 10:36–39 (NKJV)

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

1 John 5:4–5 (NKJV)

Notice what Paul writes to Timothy near the end of his life:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV)

To keep the faith is to hold on to the faith. It is to persevere in the faith. It is to continue believing.

This same Paul, who wrote to his disciple near the end of his life and said that he had kept the faith, warns us of two things:

Departures from the faith.

Shipwreck of the faith.

Departures happen when we receive another gospel and another doctrine.

As the years go by, we run the risk of being deceived by false teachings.

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Colossians 2:8 (NKJV)

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different

spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it!

2 Corinthians 11:3–4 (NKJV)

He also says to the Galatians:

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 1:6 (NKJV)

The Word of God warns us that false prophets, false teachers, false teachings, and even doctrines of demons would enter the Church.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...

1 Timothy 4:1–2 (NKJV)

These departures lead us to apostasy, which is the abandonment of the true faith.

To persevere in the faith is to persevere in the gospel of the Kingdom that we received, and in the apostles' doctrine.

Shipwreck happens when we reject a good conscience.

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck.

1 Timothy 1:18–19 (NKJV)

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Hebrews 10:19–22 (NKJV)

When we are born again, we cleanse our conscience before God and before men. That is why people came to be baptized, confessing their sins. It is a general settling of accounts. It is a cleansing.

To keep the faith is to keep a clean conscience before God and before men, as Paul says in Acts 24:16, "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men."

A crisis of faith is a crisis of conscience!

Let us look at some things that cause us to lose a good conscience:

When we sin and do not repent.

When we do not confess. Instead, we hide our guilt or shift it onto someone else or onto the circumstances. We do not restore the damage caused.

When we are unfaithful and disloyal in our relationships with people. In business, in situations that arise.

When we fail to keep our word.

A man of faith is, above all, a man of upright character.

We put our faith at risk when our conscience accuses us and we do nothing to cleanse it. To cleanse the conscience is to make right what is wrong.

If it is sin: repent, confess, make restitution for the damage.

If it is something against another person: repent, humble yourself, acknowledge the wrong, seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

If it is something against God: the same thing. Repent, humble yourself, acknowledge the wrong, seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

To persevere in the faith is to persevere in wholeness of character, keeping a good conscience before God and before men. A man of faith is, above all, a man of upright character.

To persevere in the faith is to persevere in the gospel of the Kingdom that we received, and in the apostles' doctrine. True faith is faith that is demonstrated every day — faith that makes a difference in a person's life.

When we look at Hebrews chapter 11, we see an enormous list of men and women who are considered “the heroes of faith.” Why? Because they demonstrated the faith they had in God through obedience. And we know the list is much longer. If we stopped to make our own list, we would add more names to it.

We could mention men such as Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and his friends, Joseph, John the Baptist, Stephen, the apostles, Paul, and many other unnamed people who bore witness with their faith throughout these last two thousand years of history. And Job! We could not forget Job. An entire lifetime of faith! Women such as Rahab, Deborah, Hannah, Ruth, Esther, Elizabeth, Mary, and many others as well.

Ordinary people like you and me! People who had faith to defeat their enemies and live. People who had faith to be defeated and die.

Whether living or dying, they never abandoned the faith they had! They trusted God to the end of their lives. Just like our Master and model, Jesus, who was faithful to the Father from the beginning to the end of His life here in this world.

Read the whole of Hebrews chapter 11 — it is a deeply confronting read.

Before we finish, here is a piece of counsel from the writer of Hebrews.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run

with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Hebrews 12:1–3 (NKJV)

May the Lord, when He returns, find us faithful, doing what He commanded! God bless us!

CONCLUSION

In this thirty-eighth lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we learned the fifth aspect of faith, which is continuing faith. It is the faith that must grow along with our walk. It is the faith that will save us at the end of the walk, according to our perseverance. In this lesson we saw that the faith of the past, from when we were converted, is not enough to save our soul. We must live a life of faith and perseverance — believing, seeking, learning, and living. Only in this way will faith be proven and give us the victory on the last day.

CONSIDER CAREFULLY

- 01** Name some words that are synonyms of the word faith.
- 02** Based on what was taught, when was the last time your faith was tested? How did you do?
- 03** Do you have a testimony of faith? Share the testimony of your faith with someone.
- 04** How can we lose our faith?

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

Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)

Foundations Curriculum — Lesson 38
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