

FOUNDATIONS #5

“Faith Toward God”

Review

The Christian life is compared to a construction site, so foundations are important!
The foundations of the Christian faith are Personal and Doctrinal.
Christ, the Person, the Son of God, is the Cornerstone.
We must have a personal relationship with Jesus, which comes by revelation.

Then there are 6 foundational doctrines

of the Christian faith listed in the 1st 3 verses of Hebrews 6.

The last 2 come at the end of time: resurrection and eternal judgment.
But the 1st 2 foundational doctrines are laid in our lives at the very beginning of the
Christian life: repentance from dead works and faith toward God.

Hebrews 6:1-2

**Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us move on to
maturity, not laying again a foundation of
repentance from dead works and of faith toward God...
Hebrews 6:1-2 NASB**

Notice that we cannot move on to maturity until we have faith toward God; but we
cannot have faith toward God unless we have repented from our sin.
They are 2 sides of the same coin.

Adam Clarke's Commentary

**Faith toward God is also a foundation, or fundamental principle, without
which it is impossible to please God, and without which we cannot be saved.
By repentance we feel the need of God's mercy, by faith we find that mercy.**

And this from the great Puritan Bible scholar...

Matthew Henry

**Repentance from dead works and faith towards God are connected and
always go together. They are inseparable twins; the one cannot live without
the other. Both of these are foundation-principles, which should be once well
laid, but never pulled up, so as to need to be laid over again.**

In other words, once we have truly repented, and truly believed, we do not have to keep getting saved over and over again!

But we must make sure these 2 foundations are well laid; because there is true and false repentance; and there is true and false faith.

What is true repentance?

We learned the nature of true repentance from the Old and New Testament:

New Testament Greek: “to change your mind”

Old Testament Hebrew: “to turn around”

True repentance must contain has these 2 elements and is easily tested.

Charles Spurgeon

“A proof of the conquest of a soul for Christ will be found in a real change of life. If the man does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroad, his repentance needs be repented of, and his conversion is a fiction.”

True repentance from dead works leads to the 2nd foundation, which is “faith toward God”.

But in the same way there is false repentance, there can be false faith that results in a counterfeit Christianity. So faith too must be tested.

I. Faith Toward God

A. Testing Our Faith

1. The Apostle Paul wrote 2 lengthy letters to the Church at Corinth; a thriving church planted by Paul himself; a number of great teachers and a church that moved in all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Near the end of the 2nd letter, after 29 chapters, Paul says something surprising...

2 Corinthians 13:5 NIV

Examine yourselves to be sure you are in the faith; test yourselves.

a. I say surprising because you would assume that every member of a great church like this would certainly be saved; but if so, why this?

2 Corinthians 13:5 NLT

Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.

2. Theologian Albert Barnes helps us here:

Albert Barnes

“The word (test) refers to assaying or trying metals by the powerful action of heat; and the idea is that they should make the most thorough trial of their religion (faith), to see whether it would stand the test.”

3. The genuineness of our faith is tested in how we handle the tests, trials and temptations of life.

a. The Apostle Peter confirms...

1 Peter 1:7

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

4. True faith will endure to the end. But there's much more to know.

II. Fundamental Facts About Faith

A. Salvation by Faith is Unique to Christianity

1. Christianity is unique among all the world's religions in several ways, this being primary: because salvation is not earned by our works or anything that we can do. Salvation comes by grace through faith as a gift from God;

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

2. All of the world's religions put works before salvation; only Christianity puts salvation before works.

“In all other religions, they say if you want to be ‘saved’ you must PERFORM the truth and do enough good works to earn your way into God’s favor and love, and thus also into Heaven. That’s not what the Gospel says at all.

Kevin Ott, Shadowlands

a. Gospel means “Good News”; any religion that tells me my salvation depends on me is not “Good News”!

b. The same goes for what some so-called Christians teach:

- You can only be saved if you are a member of OUR church
- You can’t be saved if you don’t speak in tongues; take a class; keep these rules; and on and on...

3. Christian salvation is not based on anything we can DO for God; it is based on our FAITH in what God HAS DONE for us! God gets all the glory!

- We love Him because He first loved us.

1 John 4:19

We love him, because he first loved us.

- We choose Him because He first chose us.

John 15:16

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...

- And we know that He loves us because of what He did for us before we did anything for Him!

Romans 5:8

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

4. So we are not saved by faith in what we have done; we are saved by faith in what God has done.

The just shall live by faith.

Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3; 11; Hebrews 10:38

5. We are made right with God without works; but never make the mistake to think that works have no place. Our works do not save us; but good works prove that we are saved!

B. The Proper Relationship of Faith and Works

1. Let's read the rest of Ephesians 2:

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

v.10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

2. Works do not save us; works confirm that we are saved!

3. Consider the somewhat controversial passage from the Apostle James, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus:

James 2:14

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

a. There is a kind of faith that is not saving faith. Example:

James 2:15-16

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

NIV: "What good is it"?

b. In the same way repentance and faith go together so do faith and good works.

James 2:17

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

c. Martin Luther led the great Protestant Reformation that centered on the great foundational doctrine of justification by faith; to be justified, “just as if I’d” never sinned on the basis of faith alone; but he also said...

“We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.”

Martin Luther

d. Works do not save us; but they verify that we are saved. Faith makes us right with God; then our works verify that we are right with God. As one writer said...

The root of justification is by faith; the fruit of justification is by works.

4. People claiming to be Christian, whose lives show no evidence that they are Christian, may not be Christians at all? Yes. This is the problem of “counterfeit Christianity”.

B. Counterfeit Christianity

1. From the beginning, there were people in the church who had a faith in God that was not “saving faith”.

James 2:19-20 NASB

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

2. To simply say you believe in Jesus is useless; Satan believes in God; but he certainly isn’t saved.

3. So what is “saving faith”? The Protest Reformers defined it for us.

C. The 3 Elements of Saving Faith

“Historical, orthodox Christianity distinguishes 3 main elements that together comprise saving faith. 3 Latin words: notitia (knowledge), assensus (assent) and fiducia (trust).

Guy M. Richard, Tabletalk

These 3 things must be present if we have “saving faith”

1. Notitia-a Latin word that means “knowledge”.
 - a. It refers to the data; the information; genuine faith must believe something that has intellectual content. It is doctrinal.
 - b. In the case of salvation, it refers to the Gospel.
 - c. Notitia is what you believe; you must have the right information.

2. Secondly, there is “Assensus”, from which we get the English word “assent”; it means that you mentally assent or agree that the information is true.
 - a. The notitia is not enough; it is not enough simply to know certain things; we must believe that those things are true.
 - b. You can know what the Gospel says; “Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”; but then you must have “assensus”, you must believe the notitia to be true.

3. But the 3rd element is what separates saving faith from the kind of faith that does not save; it is “Fiducia”, the Latin word that means trust.
 - a. To have saving faith means that you rely complete on Jesus Christ and the Word of God for your salvation and how to live your life.
 - b. **Notitia is knowledge of the Gospel; Assensus is to believe the Gospel is true; but Fiducia is living a life that demonstrates our trust in God**

III. Close: What Saving Faith Looks Like

A. Get in the Wheelbarrow

1. Back in the 1800’s Charles Blondin, a French acrobat, came to the United States and walked on a tightrope across the great Niagara Falls in upstate New York.

2. He crossed over that Falls several times, **once pushing a wheelbarrow.**

3. The crowds were ecstatic and begged him to walk across one more time;

Crowd: “Do it one more time!”

Blondin: “You’ve see me do this.”

Crowd: “YES!”

Blondin: “You all believe I can do it again?”

Crowd: “YES!”

Blondin: “Then who will get in the wheelbarrow?”

4. This is a perfect picture of saving faith: having the information, believing the information is true, then having enough trust to put your life on the line to act on it.

Rumor has it Blondin crossed the last time blindfolded with his own mother in the wheelbarrow!

**Saving faith “gets in the wheelbarrow”!
It is a life that trusts God**

B. One Example: Tithing

Malachi 3:10

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

1. Notitia: The Bible teaches the doctrine of tithing. And it says God will bless us if we tithe.

2. Assensus: We believe we should tithe and that God will bless us.

3. Fiducia: Pays tithes. Paying tithes is a trust issue.

a. Because the tithe is not 10%; it is the FIRST 10%.

b. It is the 1st 10% because God wants us to trust Him that there will be enough left to meet our needs. And more.

4. If we have been saved and trusted God for salvation of our eternal souls, we should trust Him in the matter of our money!

Close/Offering

“Faith Toward God”