

Finishing Well

Lesson #28

The School Of Faith

July 19, 2023

Matt. 8:25-26a And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

²⁶ And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?

Mark 4:38, 40 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

Luke 8:25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith?

Schopenhauer: "The first 40 years of life give us the text and the next 40 give us the commentary. For the Christian, the text is Hab. 2:4: The just shall live by faith.

The commentary is being written as we listen to God and obey His directions a day at a time. Sad to say, some understand neither the text nor the commentary and their lives are ended before they have started to live."

D. Jeremiah One of the sobering thoughts about the Christian life is the truth:

God is far more interested in who we become and what we are than in what we do.

He cares a whole lot more about how we live than about what we accomplish.

Mark 9:24b Lord, I believe; help thou my UNBELIEF.

Two Greek Words for Unbelief

1. Apistia: A form of unbelief that often shows a lack of a confidence in God to do what He has promised to do. It is a CHOICE.

a. Matt. 13:58 And he did not many mighty works there *because of their unbelief*.

b. Heb. 3:19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Choice!

c. Rom. 4:20 He staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief. Choice!

2. Apistia can lead to apeitheo [hardness of heart] which is obstinate, rebellious, disobedient; refusal to believe; apathetic. This person will not allow himself to be persuaded to believe. He stubbornly disbelieves and is disobedient.

Heb. 3:7-8 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost says, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

Heb. 4:6 Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

Heb. 4:11 Let us labor [diligently] therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Unbelief In The Christian Walk: UNBELIEF IS NOT:

1. The Absence Of Faith
2. A Negative State Of Mind
3. A State of Blank Ignorance Of God and His truth
4. A State of ignorance of the Existence and attributes of God
5. Not at intellectual state at all

Connection Between Doubt & Unbelief: To hesitate or waver; being uncertain of what to believe or do; allow circumstances, setbacks and feelings to influence decisions & change my mind

Matt. 14:31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? [Little faith > Doubt & Fear]

This doubt comes through giving up one's conviction of faith based on what one sees or feels.

- a. My Doubt Leads To Unbelief: Downward Spiral
- b. Focusing on my circumstances or my own resources will allow unbelief to GROW.
- c. When unbelief starts to GROW, it destroys confidence, makes me uncertain and builds distrust.
- d. Unbelief leads to further unbelief and finally a hardening of my heart.

So what is UNBELIEF in a Christian? The Bible represents unbelief as SIN.

TRUTH: Unbelief is the basis for ALL SIN! All sins come from UNBELIEF in God's Word and Promises: anxiety, misplaced shame, indifference, covetousness, envy, lust, bitterness, impatience, depression, pride: all sprouts from the root of unbelief in the promises of God.

Therefore, it is not a state of mind; IT IS A CONDITION OF MY HEART!

1. Unbelief is SIN. Heb. 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.
2. Unbelief is a CHOICE. Mark 16:14 Afterward Jesus appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He was risen.

3. Unbelief is a lack of CONFIDENCE.

- Withholding of confidence in One who is worthy of our confidence.

Unbelief of the heart darkens one to committing his heart and soul to the will of God.

Truth: Belief is giving God my confidence, yielding myself to Him, confiding in Him, trusting in Him, casting myself upon Him, voluntarily receiving His truth and committing myself to Him.

- *Unbelief Is At The Heart Of My Lack Of Commitment To God!*

4. Unbelief is Calling God A Liar!

I John 5:10 he who does not believe God has made Him a liar.

Heb. 6:17-18 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which *it is impossible for God to lie*, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

The Results Of Unbelief

A. Unbelief produces a heartless religion. Only ritual; no satisfying of the soul

Consider: If it is not up to God, then it is up to me. That produces frustration and sorrow.

B. Unbelief produces a legalistic religion. It clouds your eyes and heart to seeing God's will and His glory. Unbelief leads to an obedience that is selfish.

C. Unbelief produces a disobedient heart. Unbelief will lead you to disavow God's sovereignty and will lead you to do what you believe is best. Root of sin in man-withholding confidence in God

D. Unbelief produces Restlessness in Your Soul Consider: If you have NO confidence in the promises of God, you are carrying your burdens upon your own back. You Will Grow Weary!

Matt. 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

E. Unbelief results in an absence of peace in my life.

Although there may be MUCH to disturb and distress me, there is deep peace and joy in God, even in the midst of the storm, when I believe His Word and Promises.

Isa. 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

F. Unbelief results in bondage to sin.

G. Unbelief produces servants and not sons. BELIEF will lead me to come before the throne with anticipation and expectation. I am His child and depending upon Him.

H. Unbelief produces a worldly person. I am given over to a worldly way of thinking and acting because I don't believe God. I mind earthly things; not laying up treasure for heaven.

The Word of God is not my constant companion. The Holy Spirit is not my help and comfort.

Truth: I Will Not Neglect The Bible If I Believe It.

TRUTH: I Must Battle Unbelief Every Day.

I Tim. 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold on eternal life to which you were called.

➤ I fight against sin by fighting against unbelief in God's promises.

Remember: Unbelief requires a conscious decision.

Faith, A Gift From God, Is A Journey.

A. W. Tozer: "Faith is not merely a journey for the feet. It is a journey for the heart.

When God wants to build our patience, He gives us promises, sends us trials and tells us to trust Him. We are to grow in godliness and faith as we wait for the fulfillment of God's promises."

Isa. 58:11 The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

a. Protect us from sin II Cor. 12:7-10

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

b. Perfect our character James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

c. Purify our faith I Pet. 1:6-9

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

In the Bible's hall of faith in Hebrews 11, candid pictures are given of great men whose faith stands out in Old Testament history like bright stars on a dark night. All except Abel, Enoch and Noah are descendants of Abraham, the man and father of our faith.

In this chronicle Abraham is given almost half the space. He has more than twice the space allocated to the law-giver, Moses. Likewise in *Genesis*, the story of Abraham and his family is spread over the book from chapter 11 through chapter 50, while only two chapters are given to the entire story of creation.

What distinguished Abraham as a man of faith? [20th generation from Adam]

Learning To Face & Handle The Tests of Life To The GLORY OF GOD

I. Expect Tests From God

I Pet. 4:12-13 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Abraham enrolled in "The School of Faith" at age 70. [left Haran @ 75]

The spiritual history of Abraham was marked by four great crises, each of which involved the surrender of something which was naturally dear to him.

1. He was called separate himself from his native land and kindred; 70 yrs Genesis 12:1
2. He was called on to give up Lot ~80 yrs. Genesis 13:1-18

Gen. 18:10, 14 And He said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Rom. 4:19-22 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: ²⁰ he staggered not at the promise of God through UNBELIEF; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God ²¹ and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform ²² And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

1. Weak astheneo = without strength, powerless, sick; to doubt, hesitate, vacillate; double-minded

2. Considered Not = Paid No Attention To The Physical Obstacles

3. Staggered Not = diakrino ou = To be in strife with oneself; to doubt, hesitate, waver

Wuest's Word Studies: "to judge between two," "to vacillate between two opinions or decision."

James 1:2-8 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.

For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

⁷ For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

⁸ A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Wuest: Abraham did not vacillate between belief and unbelief with respect to his difficulty and the ability of God to meet it. He did not waver.

Key Points: 1. Abraham firmly believed in what God promised because he firmly believed in God's power.

2. His belief in God allowed him to overlook the visible problems to see the POWER of Him who was invisible.

3. His ability to see and trust the invisible kept him from staggering over the obstacles of doubt that surrounded him.

4. By believing, Abraham climbed to the very heights and gave glory to the Power Of God!

5. God declared Abraham righteous because He BELIEVED Him.

We look in on him at age 100 and find he is still going through soul-stretching experiences.

If we stop learning, we stop growing.

We will face new challenges, fight new battles and learn new truths.

3. He had to abandon his cherished plan about Ishmael. ~103

Genesis 17:17-18

Jack Kelly: Our flesh is like Ishmael, older, bigger, stronger. He's self-directed and self-centered, used to being the only one, used to calling the shots. He's experienced, independent and acts on his own initiative. In assessing a situation, he says, "Self, what's best for me?"

Our spirit starts out like Isaac, younger, smaller, weaker. He's God directed and God centered. He's a newcomer, inexperienced and dependent. He consults with the Spirit of God. In assessing a situation, he says, "Lord, what's best for you?" The flesh doesn't like the spirit. He thinks the spirit is weak and taunts him. He tries to assert his control over him, to push him aside, to silence his voice.

Ishmael wasn't interested in God's plan for Abraham's offspring. He was the first born and resented the intrusion of this newcomer in his family, usurping his rights. Similarly, our flesh isn't interested in God's plan for our life, only in the fulfillment of selfish desires. The flesh and the spirit cannot co-exist. They have only you in common. Salvation brings a new heart and a new spirit but not new flesh. We have to learn to walk by the spirit and deny the flesh, to prefer God's will for our lives over our own.
Gal. 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Christian character is developed via a series of tests. Frequently there is one supreme test, in view of which all others are preparatory. Fiery tests of faith which occur early in life sometimes climax in much greater tests of faith in a time of spiritual maturity. God's demand is, Son, give Me your heart [Proverbs 23:26]. It is not our intellect, talents, money, but our heart, God asks for first. When we have responded to God's requirement, He lays His hand on something especially near and dear to us, to prove the genuineness of our response. God requires truth in the inward parts and not merely on the lips. Thus, He dealt with Abraham.

4. God told him to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering. ~130 yrs. Gen. 22
Gen. 22:1-2 Now it came to pass After These Things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He [God] said, "Take now your son, Your Only Son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."
Key Point #1: God's request seems unreasonable. Isaac was a miracle child, a gift from God in response to Abraham's faith, Abraham's only son, the future of the covenant rested in him.
Key Point #2: When God asked him to offer his son, He was testing Abraham's faith, hope and love. It appeared God was wiping out everything Abraham and Sarah lived for.
"Our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable, do what seems unreasonable and expect what seems impossible." Look at Joseph in prison, Moses and Israel at the Red Sea, or David in the cave. Same lesson: We live by promises!

The POWER OF BELIEVING FAITH which GLORIFIES GOD!

II. Focus On Promises Not Explanations

Gen. 22:3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Abraham's Response: No doubt or delay, no reluctance or hesitation; instead, he "rose up early in the morning." He bowed in absolute submission to the will of God. FAITH TRIUMPHED over natural affection, over reason, and over self-will. Here was a most striking demonstration of the efficacy of Divine grace which can subdue every passion of the human heart and every imagination of the carnal mind, bringing all into "unrepining acquiescence to God."

Faith & Obedience Are Eternally Intertwined!

Gen. 22:4-5 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

[Notice on the 3rd day Abraham saw the place where he was to sacrifice His son? Coincidence]

⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and WE will come back to you."

#4. God's will NEVER Contradicts God's Promise.

He HELD ON to the promise "in Isaac shall thy seed be called. [Gen. 21:12].

#5. Abraham believed even if God allowed him to slay his son, He could raise Isaac from the dead. God had promised Abraham that Isaac would have children. It was God's problem!

Heb. 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," ¹⁹ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Truth: Faith does not demand explanations; faith rests on promises.

III. Depend On God's Provision

Gen. 22:6 So Abraham took the WOOD of the burnt offering and Laid It On Isaac His Son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

Provision of the Lamb: Gen. 22:7-12 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God Will Provide HIMSELF a lamb for a burnt offering; so the two of them went together.

Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son..

But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." ¹² And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, YOUR ONLY SON, from Me."

Consider: A true worshiper of God holds nothing back from God but obediently gives Him what He asks, trusting that He will provide.

Gen. 22:13-14 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

And Abraham called the name of the place, Adonai Yireh; The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

Abraham then gave the location a prophetic label.

It appears he somehow knew he was acting out a prophecy!

Martin Luther: "Our suffering is not worthy of the name of suffering. When I consider my crosses, trials and tribulations, I shame myself almost to death, thinking what they are in comparison of the sufferings of my blessed Savior Jesus Christ."

God Never Wastes Suffering.

Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

Spurgeon: The promises of God never shine brighter than in the furnace of affliction. It is only by passing through trials that we come to KNOW who God is — His grace, His faithfulness, His sufficiency.

Wiersbe: I need never fear the "cup of testing" the Father hands me. My Savior has already drunk the cup before me and I am following in His steps. I need not fear because the Father has prepared it for me in love. The cup He prepares for me will never harm me.

I may suffer pain and heartbreak, but He will eventually transform my suffering into glory.

II Chron. 16:9 The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen [to work mightily; to work in behalf] those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.