

“A Life of Faith”
(Romans 1:16-17)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Lately, we’ve been considering how we might better contribute to the Great Commission as a fellowship.
 - a. How we might better evangelize, disciple, worship and defend God’s truth.
 - b. Where the Lord has placed us, what the opportunities are the Lord has given us, and how He has gifted us will shape our contributions.
 - c. But there’s one thing that will have a greater bearing than all these: our spiritual condition.
 - (i) If we’re not what we should be spiritually, we won’t produce anything of value, no matter what our gifts or opportunities.
 - (ii) But if we are, we will always find some way to move the work forward.

2. With this in mind, we began looking last week at what the Bible says we should be aiming at as believers.
 - a. We’re looking at is what the Bible says will characterize true believers.
 - b. What is true of us as believers and what we should be striving for are really the same thing.
 - (i) With every believer there is the already and the not yet.
 - (a) There are things He has already placed in our hearts and changed in our lives.
 - (b) But there is the not yet: we have not yet arrived at that perfection we have in Christ; we still have a long ways to go in spiritual growth.
 - (ii) These marks, then, are also goals.
 - c. The first thing that is true of us as believers is we have spiritual knowledge: a knowledge that goes beyond our heads and reaches our hearts.
 - (i) We don’t just know what the Bible says, we’re convinced it’s true.
 - (ii) We don’t just know it’s valuable, we see its value.
 - (iii) We don’t just know it’s the power of God to salvation, we’ve experienced that power: we are alive.
 - (iv) We don’t just know it has the power to transform our lives, it has and continues to transform our lives.
 - (v) It isn’t a dead letter to us, but a living Word, something we constantly hunger and thirst for more.
 - (vi) Now these things are already true of us to some extent: but who among us would say they’re as true as they should be?
 - (vii) We’re not yet perfect, and so like Paul, we strive forward.
 - (viii) If we’re to be useful to the Lord, this is what we must do.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, let's consider a second characteristic or attribute we should be striving to put on: faith. If we are to be the kind of men, women and children the Lord can use, we must have faith; and the stronger the better.
 - a. Without faith, we have no spiritual life.
 - b. Without faith, we will have no spiritual strength.
 - c. Without faith, we will never serve the Lord as we should.

2. Let's consider three things about faith this evening to encourage us to seek after the Lord for more:
 - a. First, and most fundamentally, faith is the beginning of spiritual life.
 - b. Second, faith strengthens all our graces.
 - c. Finally, if we are to be useful to the Lord, we must live by faith.

II. Sermon.

A. First, if we are to be useful to the Lord, we must have spiritual life.

1. Faith is where spiritual life begins in our souls.
 - a. Without faith, we might be alive physically, but we're dead spiritually.
 - b. Faith is the first motion of saving grace in our souls, the first sign of life.
 - c. Once the Lord quickens us to life by His Spirit, we immediately look to Christ and are saved.

2. Faith is what plugs us into the life of Christ – it cuts us off from the wild olive tree and engrafts us into Christ.
 - a. It applies Christ to our soul, washing away our sins, and clothing us with His righteousness.
 - b. It places us in Christ and gives us all that is His, so that we can know that we're delivered from hell and that we will see heaven.

3. Remember, faith is not a work, but a turning from works to Christ.
 - a. It's the work of the Holy Spirit, giving us the ability to receive Christ's work.
 - (i) By nature, we're blind to the glory of Christ; but the Spirit opens our eyes to see it.
 - (ii) We're deaf by nature to the demands of God, but the Spirit opens our ears by changing our hearts.

 - b. Faith is the ability to look to Christ, to see in Him all we need, to believe Him in everything He says, to turn entirely away from our own "good" works to save us, and to trust Him alone.
 - c. If we are to be the kind of people the Lord can use, we must be spiritually alive: we must trust in Christ alone for our salvation.

B. Second, if we are to be the kind of people the Lord can use, we must have transformed lives: we must be sanctified.

1. Faith is able to strengthen all our graces and effect this transformation.

- a. Faith is able to move us to repentance: when by faith we see that we have sinned against infinite love; when we see our guilt and God's mercy, it makes us grieve and turn from that sin.
 - b. Faith gives birth to hope: when we see through faith what God says and know He is faithful, then hope rises in our hearts that God will do what He says.
 - c. Faith strengthens patience: when we know God works all things together for our good in His gracious Providence, then we can more easily submit to His will and wait to see what He will bring.
 - d. Turning from our sins and doing what is right, while looking forward to what He has promised, while patiently enduring whatever the Lord brings into our lives, is what sanctification is all about.
2. Faith is to our souls, what the spirit is to our body.
- a. Without the spirit, your body is dead.
 - b. Without faith, your soul is dead.
 - c. Faith is a life-giving principle that transforms the soul.
 - d. If we are to be useful to the Lord, we must be sanctified.
- C. Finally, if we are to be useful to the Lord, we must live by faith.
1. Christ wants to use us for His glory. To use us, He wants to live in us and through us. Faith is how Christ He does this.
 - a. Paul writes, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).
 - b. Christ lives in our heart by His Spirit, and He is working His life out in ours, but He does it through faith.
 2. Everything we do, we are to do by faith.
 - a. We are to pray in faith: "And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matt. 21:21-22). We are to pray for what He wants.
 - b. We are to obey in faith: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Heb. 11:8). We are to do what He wants.
 - c. By faith, we are to see things as they really are and not just as they appear, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). We are to see what He tells us is true.

- d. By faith, we are to trust that the Lord will protect us as we set out to serve Him, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). He will protect us as we do what He wants us to do.
 - e. By faith, we are to know our souls are secure in Christ, “For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). Christ will keep us safe; we don’t need to be afraid to serve Him.
3. Finally, it follows from this that the stronger our faith, the more richly Christ will dwell in us and the more we will be able to serve the Lord.
- a. Faith is all we need, and the more we have the better off we’ll be.
 - b. Without the certainty of faith, we’ll always be crippled by the uncertainty of the evidence of our eyes.
 - (i) If David had trusted his senses instead of God, he never would have fought his enemy, Goliath, and won.
 - (ii) If the martyrs had looked at things as they appear outwardly, they never would have held fast to the Gospel and sealed their testimony with their blood.
 - (iii) But these didn’t trust their eyes – they believed God, and so they won the victory.
 - (iv) How will we ever be able to do great things for the Lord, if we don’t learn to trust Him?
 - (v) The Lord is able powerfully to use those who have strong faith. How many have lived and died with a weak faith who did much less than they might otherwise have done?
 - (vi) Don’t be weak in faith:
 - (a) Apply Christ to your sins and know they’re forgiven.
 - (b) Enliven your graces and become spiritually strong in Christ.
 - (c) Believe and take hold of His promises – know He will do what He says.
 - (d) God isn’t honored when we doubt His Word; He is honored when we believe Him and act on His truth.
 - c. We need stronger faith – and that’s one of the reasons the Lord gave us the Supper.
 - (i) Here, Jesus condescends to our weakness by giving us signs and symbols that we can perceive with our senses.
 - (ii) He wants us to look up to Him, to see that He is, that He is sovereign, that He cares, that He is faithful, and to draw from Him the grace we need to trust Him more than we might do greater things for Him.
 - (iii) Let’s look to Him now and ask Him for the grace we need to gain a greater faith that we might serve Him with greater zeal. Amen.