Laying the Foundation

Lesson 8

FAITH IS FOUNDED ON FACT

Catechism Two, Lesson 8

Reading: 1 John 5:1–15

1. Why Is Faith So Basic To Redemption?

Faith is included among the six foundation stones or first principles of Christ precisely because it is basic. There is no salvation apart from believing upon Christ as the Incarnate Son of God.

A. Faith is God’s chosen channel of God’s saving grace.

Faith, like repentance, is a gift from God. By His grace, or unmerited favor, God creates faith within us, enabling us to believe His Word and to rely upon Him as our Savior.

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 (Eph. 2:8, 9).

B. Faith is the first step in pleasing God.

Faith is not like money; we do not hoard it up and present it to God in order to please Him. We simply allow Him to persuade us that He does indeed exist and that His Word is utterly trustworthy. We please Him by remaining open to His persuading.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6).

C. Faith is the only way we gain access to God’s holy presence.

Sin separates; blood makes a fresh way of approach. But for us to come to God by means of the new and living way through Christ, we must exercise faith in His blood. We must allow that shed blood to speak peace to our own conscience.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Rom 5:1, 2).

D. Faith is our means of becoming stabilized in the truth.

Until we develop a settled and firm conviction of what we believe, we will continue to be blown about by every wind of doctrine. We only begin to mature after we have committed ourselves by definite decision to believing God’s Word.

If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established (Isa. 7:9).

E. Our confession of faith regarding Christ qualifies us for other experiences.

Very early in the history of the Church, creeds became important. Why? A creed—from the Latin credo—is a statement of faith or confession. Converts were required to verbalize what they believed before they were permitted to be water baptized or to take the Lord’s Supper.

And Philip said. If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest [be baptized]. And he [the eunuch] answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37).

2. What Areas Of Man’s Life Are Affected By Faith?

Just as in repentance, all four basic areas of life are touched: mind, emotion, will, and spirit. Genuine persuasion creates right thinking about God, right feeling, definite decisions, and spiritual commitment. Faith activates the whole man.

A. Mind.

Faith is more than intellectual assent; it is commitment with knowledge to obey the truth of the gospel. Men cannot believe until they have heard the message or “good news”; this is why preaching, teaching, and literature are essential. The mind must be informed of the truth.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (Rom. 10:14–16).

B. Emotion.

Until our affections are captivated, mental assent will not necessarily lead to change. We must be deeply stirred and our desires must embrace the truth about Jesus. Heart response is absolutely essential, for everything else flows out from the heart.

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom 10:9, 10).

C. Will.

Real persuasion results in action. It is the will that sets us into motion. We may think things over and allow our emotions to dwell upon them with delight, but until we decide to act, we do not do anything about our faith. Christ requires obedience and this is impossible apart from the determination of the will. We must decide to become involved in Christ by doing what He has said to do.

[The Philippian jailer] said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:30, 31).

D. Spirit.

Faith makes us receptive to God. He can enter into us and change us. The Holy Spirit produces within us the continued ability to believe God and enables us to grow up into His likeness as we persevere in believing.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name (John 1:12).

3. Is Faith Contrary To Knowledge?

Faith is based upon a higher knowledge, the knowledge which comes only from God. But revelation does not contradict historical and scientific fact when these are based upon reality and are sufficiently complete. Such things that men call “knowledge” are only conjecture or opinion rather than fact. Faith rests solidly on truth as God knows it. Faith gives us spiritual understanding of all that is real.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Heb. 11:3).

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3).

Faith is our acceptance of God’s truth as it is revealed to us; it is not limited to what can only be learned through our senses and instruments of science. God is Spirit. Some facts about Him can only be spiritually discerned.

A. Faith is not Gnosticism.

There is no contradiction between matter and Spirit in the Christian faith. God was manifest in the flesh—He took upon Himself a real human body and became subject to the same limitations we all experience as mortals. Christ was historical; He existed at a point in time and space, and He continues to live forever in His resurrected body.

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God (1 John 4:2).

B. Faith is not Pragmatism.

William James, John Dewey, and others of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries tried to avoid the necessity for commitment to faith as fact. They taught that it is sufficient to adopt a “working hypothesis.” If this produces the desired results it was considered worth keeping. Whether or not it could be proven true was irrelevant. God gives us truth, and this also works. Faith is commitment to absolute truth, to a God who cannot lie.

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began (Tit. 1:1, 2).

C. Faith is not Existentialism.

Faith is not inner or subjective reality alone; it embraces and reacts to objective reality—a God who is there and whose words are truth. Faith is valid not because it is self-authenticating through personal awareness, but because God’s record concerning His Son is reliable. Faith is not mystical but historically based.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us … (1 John 1:1–3).

4. What Is Faith’s Strongest Guarantee?

Faith is guaranteed by the nature of God Himself. God is absolute truth. He cannot change and He cannot lie—this is what ‘immutable’ means. In order to make His promises and His gospel secure, He backed them up by covenant oath. He swore this oath by none other than Himself, the greatest of all. He has put His own character on the line.

For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us (Heb. 6:16–18).

5. How Does John Relate Faith To Fact? (1 John 5)

This entire chapter describes faith as the result of real encounter between man and God. Faith is our reaction to something—or Someone—very real.

A. Faith produces right conduct (vv. 1–5).

We put it together in mind, emotion, will, and spirit, and come out with changed behavior. We experience a genuine spiritual birth and become new people. For this reason, we are able to live differently. We can love other believers. We can keep God’s commandments. We can even overcome the present world system.

B. Faith creates experiences which are credentials to believers (vv. 6–8).

The strongest credential for a believer is his own changed life. He has become a living epistle. It is written in his heart that God is faithful. We experience the reality of the gospel in three distinct ways: the blood of cleansing and forgiveness, the waters of baptism, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

C. Faith creates an internal witness (vv. 9–12).

In Romans 8:16, Paul describes the affect of this witness in producing inner assurance regarding our relationship to God. We have a deep sense of belonging. We truly are His children and we know it.

D. Faith is the proof of the confidence we exhibit (vv. 13–21).

We believe our prayers are answered because God is there to hear them and to act upon our petitions when we pray in accord with His purposes. This knowledge that we must pray according to His will to be heard lifts prayer out of the realm of autosuggestion. Our reliance is not upon our prayers but upon Someone outside ourselves.

Home Study: Lesson 8

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What areas of life are affected by repentance and faith?

a.

b.

c.

d.

2. Why must God be apprehended by faith rather than science?

The answers to the next three questions will be found in 1 John, chapter 5.

3. In what three ways will our conduct be changed by faith?

a.

b.

c.

4. In what three ways does God give witness to Himself in heaven and on earth?

In Heaven On Earth

a. a.

b. b.

c. c.

5. How can we be sure God will answer our prayers?