

FAITH
PRESENTED BY
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OUR STUDY TONIGHT CENTERS AROUND THE THEME OF FAITH. I DO NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR US TO FIND A THEME WHICH IS MORE CENTRAL TO THE TEACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD RELATIVE TO THE SALVATION OF MAN THAN THIS GREAT DOCTRINE OF FAITH. THOUGH I HAVE MADE THIS STATEMENT IN EACH OF THESE OTHER LESSONS DEALING WITH THESE GENERAL THEMES THAT WE ARE DISCUSSING, I FEEL THE NEED TO REPEAT THIS EVENING THE ADMONITION, THE EXHORTATION, TO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE NOT SEEKING TO BE EXHAUSTIVE IN OUR STUDY. CERTAINLY IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PRESENT IN A LESSON LIKE THIS ALL OF THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE CONCERNING FAITH, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE TEACHING OF FAITH, THE FACT OF FAITH PERMEATES EVERY PORTION OF SCRIPTURE FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION. BUT I DO HOPE THAT IN THE COURSE OF OUR LESSON WE CAN PRESENT SOME THOUGHTS WHICH WILL HELP YOU TO APPRECIATE WHAT FAITH IS AND TO HELP YOU APPRECIATE WHAT FAITH IS INTENDED TO DO IN THE LIFE OF HIM WHO HAS IT IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT I THINK TO OVERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH AS IT STANDS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN. FIRST AND FOREMOST OF COURSE IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN IS THE TRUTH THAT WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH. (AS I PRESENT THESE VARIOUS THOUGHTS HERE, I AM GOING TO MENTION SOME PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE. I WILL NOT READ THEM BECAUSE IT WOULD SIMPLY MAKE THE LESSON TOO LONG, BUT I WOULD SUGGEST THEM FOR YOUR FURTHER CONSIDERATION.) WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH, ACTS 16:31, EPHESIANS 2:8. WE ARE ENRICHED WITH THE SPIRIT BY FAITH, GALATIANS 3:5,14. WE ARE SANCTIFIED BY FAITH, ACTS 26:18. AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE KEPT BY FAITH, 1 PETER 1:5, ROMANS 11:20. AND WE SURMOUNT OUR DIFFICULTIES BY FAITH, ROMANS 4:18-21, HEBREWS 11:17-19, 27.

BUT NOT ONLY WOULD IT BE IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH AS IT RELATES TO THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH AS ITS VALUE IS SEEN IN THE THOUGHTS OF ALMIGHTY GOD. FOR INSTANCE WHEN WE THINK OF FAITH AS IT EXISTS IN THE MIND OF GOD, THAT IS HIS CONSIDERATION OF FAITH WITHIN THE INDIVIDUAL, WE DISCOVER THAT FAITH IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO PLEASE GOD, HEBREWS 11:6. WE KNOW THAT GOD REGARDS UNBELIEF AS THE GREATEST OF SINS, JOHN 16:9, ROMANS 14:23. WE KNOW THAT UNBELIEF PUTS A LIMITATION UPON THE EXERCISE OF THE POWER OF GOD AND, THAT WHERE UNBELIEF EXISTS, GOD IS NOT ABLE TO SHOW FORTH HIS POWER AS HE OTHERWISE MIGHT DO, MARK 6:5,6.

IT WOULD ALSO BE IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH AS WE LOOK AT ITS PLACE IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE. FAITH, ACCORDING TO JOHN 7:38, MAKES US A CONSTANT BLESSING TO OTHER PEOPLE. ACCORDING TO MARK 2:3-5 IT LEADS US TO PUT FORTH AN EFFORT ON BEHALF OF OTHER INDIVIDUALS. ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 15:28, FAITH INDUCES PERSEVERANCE AND SERVICE.

WHILE WE HAVE PRESENTED THEM IN ORDER THAT, SEEING THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH, WE MIGHT DESIRE TO KNOW JUST EXACTLY WHAT FAITH IS, THAT WE MIGHT DESIRE TO HAVE A FIRM DEFINITION, THAT WE MIGHT HAVE A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF THIS WORD WHICH DESCRIBES A QUALITY WHICH IS SO PRECIOUS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN, SO NECESSARY IN THE MIND OF GOD, AND SO VITAL TO THE CHRIST EXPERIENCE AND SERVICE.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE TERM FAITH? THE TERM "FAITH" IS NOT USED IN THE SCRIPTURE EVERY TIME IN THE SAME SENSE. IN FACT, THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH THE WORD "FAITH" IS USED. FOR PURPOSES OF DEFINITION, WE MIGHT REFER TO THESE THREE USES OF "FAITH" AS THE OBJECTIVE USE, THE SUBJECTIVE USE, AND THE PRACTICAL USE. NOW THE OBJECTIVE USE OF THE TERM "FAITH" REFERS TO THAT SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE WHICH CAME BY AND IS RELATED TO JESUS CHRIST. AS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS USE, WE TURN TO ACTS 6:7, AND WE READ, "THE PRIESTS WERE OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH." NOW THIS GREAT

COMPANY OF PRIESTS WAS NOT OBEIENT TO THEIR PERSONAL FAITH. THEY DID NOT GET A FAITH AND THEN OBEY THE DICTATES OF THAT FAITH, BUT RATHER THEY LOOKED AT THE FAITH OR THE SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE WHICH WAS RELATED TO JESUS CHRIST AND THEN THEY OBEYED THE THINGS THAT THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST DICTATED. THIS IS THE OBJECTIVE USE. IT REFERS SIMPLY TO THE SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE THAT IS RELATED TO, IS IN CONNECTION WITH, JESUS CHRIST.

THE SUBJECTIVE USE TALKS OF MY PERSONAL FAITH. THE SUBJECTIVE USE SPEAKS OF THE FAITH WHICH IS IN THE INDIVIDUAL. FOR ILLUSTRATION, WE FIND IN ROMANS 10:17 THAT, "SO WHEN FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD," WHICH IS TO SAY THAT MY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, MY PERSONAL FAITH THAT HE IS LORD AND SAVIOR, IS RELATED TO THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IS REVEALED OF HIM IN HIS WORD.

THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE TERM "FAITH" REFERS TO OBDIENCE UNTO THE FAITH. IT SPEAKS OF THE PRACTICAL EXPRESSION OF FAITH. FOR ILLUSTRATION, WE TURN TO HEBREWS 13:7 AND IN THAT VERSE WE FIND A REFERENCE MADE TO THE ELDERS AND INSTRUCTION TO THE CONGREGATION THAT THEY "IMITATE THEIR FAITH." NOW THE TERM FAITH THERE STANDS FOR THE PRACTICAL EXPRESSION OF THE FAITH OF THE ELDERS, NOT PARTICULARLY THEIR PERSONAL FAITH, FOR WE ARE NOT TO IMITATE ANOTHER PERSONAL FAITH, WE ARE TO DERIVE OUR FAITH FROM THE WORD OF GOD, BUT WE ARE TO IMITATE THE EXPRESSION OF THAT FAITH AS THEY LIVE THAT FAITH IN THEIR LIVES. SO IT CAN BE USED TO REFER TO AN EXPRESSION OF FAITH AS SEEN IN THE OBDIENCE THAT WAS RENDERED THROUGH THE SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE THAT CAME BY JESUS CHRIST.

NOW IN OUR LESSON TONIGHT WE ARE ELIMINATING TWO OF THESE USES. WE ARE NOT GOING TO LOOK AT THE SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE THAT CAME BY JESUS CHRIST. WE ARE NOT LOOKING TONIGHT AT THE PRACTICAL EXPRESSION OF FAITH ON THE PART OF A CHRISTIAN WHICH MAY BE REFERRED TO AS OBDIENCE OF THE FAITH. WE ARE LOOKING AT THE PERSONAL FAITH THAT A CHRISTIAN HAS IN JESUS CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD.

BUT HERE AGAIN WE MUST ASK THE QUESTION, "WHEN WE SPEAK OF PERSONAL FAITH, WHAT DO WE MEAN? HOW DO WE DEFINE FAITH?" I AM CERTAIN THAT WHEN WE ASK FOR A DEFINITION OF FAITH, THAT THE FIRST PASSAGE THAT COME TO OUR MINDS IS HEBREWS 11:1. "NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPE FOR, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN." BUT OUR PROBLEM HERE IS THAT THIS IS NOT REALLY A DEFINITION OF FAITH. HEBREWS 11:1 WAS NEVER INTENDED TO BE A DICTIONARY DEFINITION OF WHAT CONSTITUTES FAITH. IT IS A DESCRIPTION OF FAITH. LET ME ILLUSTRATE. IN JAMES 1:27 WE FIND JAMES MAKING THE STATEMENT, "PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED BEFORE GOD AND THE FATHER IS THIS, TO VISIT THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS IN THEIR AFFLICTION, AND TO KEEP HIMSELF UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD." NOW JAMES IN THAT PASSAGE WAS NOT GIVING A DEFINITION, AN EXHAUSTIVE DEFINITION, OF PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION. RATHER HE WAS GIVING A DESCRIPTION OF PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION AS IT IS EVIDENCED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHILD OF GOD. IN 1 JOHN 4:8 WE FIND THE SIMPLE STATEMENT, "GOD IS LOVE," BUT WHEN JOHN SAID, "GOD IS LOVE," JOHN WAS NOT GIVING A DEFINITION OF GOD, JOHN WAS GIVING A DESCRIPTION OF ONE OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. THE SAME IS TRUE IN HEBREWS 11:1. WE DON'T HAVE A DEFINITION OF FAITH, WE HAVE A DESCRIPTION OF FAITH. IF THEN WE SEEK A DEFINITION OF FAITH, WHERE SHALL WE FIND IT? THE SURPRISING ANSWER IS THAT WE DO NOT FIND IT IN THE WORD OF GOD. WE FIND THE EVIDENCE WHICH BY WHICH WE MAY MAKE A DEFINITION, BUT WE DO NOT FIND ANY PASSAGE DEFINES FAITH AS SUCH. I THINK PERHAPS ONE OF THE BEST DEFINITIONS THAT WE MIGHT GIVE IS THAT "FAITH IS THE GOING OUT OF THE HEART FROM ITSELF AND ITS RESTING ON GOD IN CONFIDENT TRUST FOR ALL GOOD." NOW LET ME REPEAT THAT AND YOU LISTEN CAREFULLY. "FAITH IS THE GOING OUT OF THE HEART FROM SELF, AND IT'S RESTING ON GOD IN CONFIDENT TRUST FOR ALL GOOD." THIS DEFINITION BECOMES PARTICULARLY MEANINGFUL WHEN WE APPLY IT IN THE LIVES OF SINFUL MEN. BUT WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE RELIANCE OF THE HEART UPON GOD, THE CONFIDENT TRUST IN GOD FOR THE SUPPLYING OF ALL THAT IS GOOD, IN RELATION TO SINFUL MEN, WE ARE SPEAKING OF THE RELIANCE THAT SINFUL MAN HAS UPON GOD FOR THE SUPPLYING OF THAT GREATEST GOOD THAT GOD CAN BESTOW--THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND THE RECEPTION OF THE SINNER INTO THE BOSOM OF GOD.

BUT NOW AS WE LOOK AT THIS PERSONAL FAITH, AS WE LOOK AT THIS GOING OUT OF THE HEART IN RELIANCE UPON GOD IN CONFIDENT TRUST THAT GOD WILL SUPPLY ALL GOOD, WE SOMETIMES MAKE A MISTAKE BY FRAGMENTING THE CONCEPT OF FAITH. WE FRAGMENT FAITH BY DIVIDING IT INTO ITS CONSTITUENT

ELEMENTS AND LOOKING AT ANY ONE OF THEM AND SAYING HERE IS FAITH, HERE IS FAITH, AND HERE IS FAITH. NOW WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE DIFFERENT SEGMENTS THAT GO TO MAKE A VALID PERSONAL FAITH, IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT THERE IS NO VALID FAITH UNTIL ALL THREE OF THESE ELEMENTS ARE PRESENT. WHAT ARE THEY? 1. THERE IS AN INTELLECTUAL ELEMENT WHICH ENTERS INTO PERSONAL FAITH. THIS INCLUDES A BELIEF IN THE REVELATION OF GOD, REVELATION OF GOD AS IT IS SEEN IN NATURE, THE REVELATION OF GOD AS IT IS GIVEN IN THE HISTORICAL ACTS OF SCRIPTURE-- ALL OF THE DOCTRINES THAT ARE TAUGHT IN THE WORD OF GOD RELATING TO MAN'S SINFULNESS, TO THE REDEMPTION OF GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, TO THE CONDITIONS FOR SALVATION, TO THE BLESSINGS THAT GOD IS GOING TO BESTOW, AND ALL OF THE THINGS THAT HE HAS PROMISED TO GIVE UNTO HIS CHILDREN. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT. FOR UNLESS ONE COMES FIRST OF ALL TO THE POINT WHERE HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, UNLESS HE COMES FIRST OF ALL TO THE POINT WHERE HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS GOD INCARNATE, IN THE FLESH, THEN HE IS NOT PREPARED TO PROCEED TO THE OTHER ELEMENTS THAT WILL MAKE THIS ONE VALID. ON THE PART OF MANY INDIVIDUALS THIS INTELLECTUAL ELEMENT OF FAITH IS GREATLY DESPAIRED. BUT IT OUGHT NOT TO BE, FOR THIS ELEMENT OF FAITH IS ESSENTIAL TO THE OTHER TWO. ONE CANNOT HAVE A VALID FAITH, ONE CANNOT HAVE, TO USE A COMMON TERM, A SAVING FAITH, UNLESS HE DOES BELIEVE IN ALL OF THE HISTORICAL AND SPIRITUAL FACTS CONCERNING JESUS AND HIS NATURE AS THEY ARE SET FORTH IN THE WORD OF GOD.

WHEN ONE HAS THE INTELLECTUAL ELEMENT OF FAITH, HE MAY THEN HAVE THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT OF FAITH. THIS HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS BEING "THE AWAKENING OF THE SOUL TO ITS PERSONAL NEEDS AND TO THE PERSONAL APPLICABILITY OF THE REDEMPTION PROVIDED IN CHRIST TOGETHER WITH AN IMMEDIATE ASSENT TO THESE TERMS." IN OTHER WORDS, ALL WE ARE SAYING CONCERNING THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT OF FAITH IS THAT IT IS AT THIS POINT THAT ONE REALIZES THAT WHAT HE HAS ACCEPTED INTELLECTUALLY-- THAT HE IS A SINNER IN NEED OF A SAVIOR--IS APPLICABLE UNTO HIM, AND THAT HE IS LOST WITHOUT JESUS CHRIST. IT IS IN THIS PARTICULAR ELEMENT--THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT OF FAITH--THAT TOO MUCH EMPHASIS HAS SOMETIMES BEEN PLACED. WHILE IT IS A CONSTITUENT ELEMENT OF FAITH, IT OUGHT NOT TO BE, AND IT MUST NEVER BE, REGARDED AS BEING THE ONLY OR THE MAJOR ELEMENT. THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE TOO GREAT A DEGREE OF EMOTION IN THEIR FAITH TEND TO BE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE TOO QUICK TO BACKSLIDE AND WHO ARE IN CONSTANT FEELING OF A NEED TO BE SAVED AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN. IT IS AN UNSTABLE FAITH WHEN THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT OF FAITH IS THE PREDOMINANT ELEMENT IN PERSONAL FAITH.

THEN, THERE IS A THIRD ELEMENT. THIS WE MIGHT CALL VOLUNTARY ELEMENT. THE VOLUNTARY ELEMENT OF FAITH IS THE LOGICAL OUTGROWTH OF THESE FIRST TWO. WHEN A MAN ACCEPTS THE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURE THAT JESUS IS INDEED THE SON OF GOD, AND WHEN IN THE SECOND STATE HE REALIZES THAT THESE TRUTHS ARE APPLICABLE TO HIM AND THAT HE NEEDS THE SAVIOR, THEN THE THIRD STEP, THE LOGICAL STEP, IS FOR HIM TO TAKE THE PROPER STEPS TO APPROPRIATE WHAT JESUS HAS TO OFFER UNTO HIMSELF. EACH PRECEDING ELEMENT OF FAITH LOGICALLY LEADS TO THE NEXT AND THE FIRST TWO ARE LOGICALLY CULMINATED IN THIS THIRD, OR VOLUNTARY, OR SOME REFER TO IT AS THE DYNAMIC, ELEMENT OF FAITH WHERE ONE APPROPRIATES TO HIMSELF THE BLESSINGS OF THAT WHICH HE HAS COME TO BELIEVE. IT IS THIS CONCEPT OF FAITH THAT IS USED IN SCRIPTURE WHEN, FOR INSTANCE IN ROMANS 5, WE READ THAT WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH. IT IS THIS CONCEPT OF FAITH THAT IS USED IN EPHESIANS 2:8 WHEN THE SCRIPTURE SAYS, "FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH." IT IS THIS CONCEPT THAT WE CAN HAVE IN MIND, THAT WE MUST HAVE IN MIND, WHEN WE SPEAK OF FAITH THAT SAVES. IT IS NOT SIMPLY THE INTELLECTUAL ASSENT TO ITEMS OF BELIEF. IT IS NOT SIMPLY THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THESE ITEMS WHICH I BELIEVE APPLY TO ME. A SAVING FAITH OCCURS WHEN A MAN WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS, BELIEVING THAT HE NEEDS JESUS CHRIST, REACHES OUT IN AN EXPRESSION OF THAT FAITH AND LAYS HOLD ON JESUS CHRIST AS HIS LORD. WE CAN SAY OF NO MAN, "HE IS SAVED," UNTIL HIS FAITH IS EXERCISED IN A VOLUNTARY APPROPRIATION OF THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST UNTO HIMSELF. WHENEVER THE SCRIPTURE SAYS WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, THIS IS WHAT THE SCRIPTURE MEANS.

AS MEMBERS OF THE N.T. CHURCH WE NEED TO LEARN THE LESSON THAT WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH-- THIS KIND OF FAITH. WE HAVE SO FAR REACTED AGAINST THE ERRONEOUS TEACHING OF SOME THAT WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH ALONE, THAT WE HAVE REACHED THE POINT WHERE IT SEEMS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT

MAN IS SAVED BY FAITH, PERIOD! ONE EXTREME IS JUST AS WRONG AS THE OTHER. WHEN WE REACH THE POINT THAT WE CANNOT PREACH AS PAUL PREACHED, WHEN WE REACH THE POINT THAT WE CAN'T STAND UP AND SAY, "BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH" WITHOUT MAKING SOME KIND OF ADDITIONAL EXPLANATION SO THAT WE NOT OFFEND SOME BRETHREN, THEN WE HAVE OVER-REACTED, WE HAVE GONE TOO FAR, AND WE HAVE NEGATED ONE OF THE GREAT CONCEPTS TAUGHT IN THE WORD OF GOD BECAUSE WE HAVE FAILED TO UNDERSTAND. PAUL SAID WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH AND EVERYBODY WHO HAS EVER BEEN SAVED WAS SAVED BY FAITH AND IF YOU ARE SAVED TONIGHT, YOU ARE SAVED BY FAITH AND NOT BY ANYTHING ELSE.

HOW SHALL WE THINK OF FAITH AS IT IS RELATED TO MAN? HOW SHALL WE THINK OF FAITH AS IT IS BORN, AS IT COMES INTO THE HEART OF MAN? THERE ARE SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT ARE NECESSARY.

1. FAITH IS BORN OF NEED. UNTIL A MAN REALIZES THAT THERE IS A NEED IN HIS LIFE, UNTIL MAN IS MADE TO REALIZE THAT HE IS A SINNER, THAT HE IS LOST, THAT HE IS HOPELESS, THAT HE IS UNDONE, THAT HE NEEDS SOMETHING THAT NEITHER HE NOR ANY OTHER MAN CAN SUPPLY, HE WILL NEVER HAVE ANY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. THAT'S THE REASON THAT IN OUR DAY FAITH IS SUCH A PRECIOUS COMMODITY, FOR IN OUR AGE WHERE MEN SPEAK OF MEN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS, IN OUR AGE WHEN THE KNOWLEDGE OF MAN IS EXPANDING AT A TREMENDOUS RATE, DOUBLING EVERY 7 TO 15 YEARS DEPENDING UPON THE ESTIMATE YOU GET, WHEN MAN IS SENDING MISSILES AND MEN AROUND THE MOON, WHEN MAN IS TALKING ABOUT LANDING ON THE MOON, WHEN MAN HAS BECOME ENAMORED OF HIS INTELLEGENCE AND HIS OWN ABILITIES SO THAT HE HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE HE SAYS, "I CAN DO IT ALL AND I DON'T HAVE NEED OF ANYTHING," WE HAVE A SITUATION WHICH IS NOT CONDUCIVE TO FAITH. MAN BELIEVES THAT WHAT HE CAN'T DO CAN'T BE DONE AND ANYTHING MAN CAN'T SAVE CAN'T BE SAVED, BUT MAN NEEDS TO LEARN THE LESSON THAT THERE IS A NEED WHICH HE CANNOT SUPPLY, THAT THERE IS SOMETHING LACKING WHICH MAN CANNOT FILL WITH ALL OF HIS INGENUITY, THAT THERE IS SOMETHING MISSING THAT MAN CANNOT GIVE UNTO HIMSELF, NOR CAN HE BUY IT ANYWHERE. UNTIL THEN THERE WILL BE AN ABSENCE OF FAITH. THIS IS THE GREAT TASK THAT FACES ANYONE WHO PREACHES THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. THE GREAT DIFFICULTY I FACE IS NOT TO GET MEN TO BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, THOUGH IN THIS AGE OF SKEPTICISM IT MAY BE A LITTLE MORE DIFFICULT. THE GREAT PROBLEM I FACE IS NOT EVEN TO GET MEN TO BE IMMersed INTO JESUS CHRIST FOR WHEN THEY HAVE FAITH, THAT WILL NATURALLY BE AN EXPRESSION OF IT. MY PROBLEM IS TO GET MEN TO SEE THAT THERE IS A NEED WHICH WILL LEAD THEM TO HAVE A FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD WHO ALONE CAN SUPPLY THE NEED OF THEIR SOULS. FAITH IS BORN OF NEED AND UNTIL YOU FEEL THERE IS A NEED THAT ONLY JESUS CAN SUPPLY, JUST THAT LONG YOUR FAITH IN HIM IS GOING TO BE LIMITED.

2. FAITH IN MAN IS RELATED TO KNOWLEDGE, THE KNOWLEDGE THAT MAN HAS OF HIM IN WHOM THAT FAITH IS HELD. THERE ARE THOSE IN OUR DAY WHO SAY THAT FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE ARE REALLY UNRELATED AND THAT I MAY HAVE FAITH IN A MAN, IN JESUS FOR INSTANCE, WITHOUT ANY KNOWLEDGE OF HIS LIFE OR IN SPITE OF THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I POSSESS. AND THEREFORE, IT DOESN'T REALLY MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE WHAT KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE OF JESUS WHETHER THE KNOWLEDGE IS THAT HE WAS TRUTHFUL AND HONEST, OR WHETHER THE KNOWLEDGE IS THAT HE WAS A DECEIVER OF THE PEOPLE AND LED PEOPLE ASTRAY, MAKING THEM BELIEVE THAT HE WAS THE SON OF GOD. THE IDEA IS THAT IN SPITE OF WHAT KNOWLEDGE WE POSSESS OF JESUS HERE, WE CAN STILL HAVE FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. BUT THIS IS NOT SO. FAITH IS RELATED TO KNOWLEDGE AND MY FAITH IS DEPENDENT UPON THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE OF THE NATURE AND THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST. I THINK WE CAN SEE THAT. LET'S SUPPOSE THAT I HAVE SOME MONEY THAT I WISH TO INVEST AND YOU SEE ME WALKING DOWN THE STREET AND YOU ASK ME WHERE I'M GOING AND I TELL YOU I AM GOING OVER HERE TO SEE MR. SO-AND-SO. I HAVE SOME MONEY TO INVEST AND I WANT TO INVEST IT WITH HIM. YOU LOOK AT ME RATHER STARTLED AND ASK, "BUT DIDN'T YOU KNOW THAT MR. SO-AND-SO WAS THE MAN WHO JUST LAST YEAR OR JUST TEN YEARS AGO WAS IN SUCH-AND-SUCH A COMMUNITY AND HE BILKED THEM OUT OF THEIR SAVINGS? DON'T YOU KNOW THAT HE IS A DECEIVER OF THE PEOPLE? HOW CAN YOU HAVE ANY TRUST IN HIM? HOW CAN YOU HAVE FAITH IN A MAN LIKE THAT?" AND I RESPOND, "WELL, KNOWLEDGE OF A THING LIKE THAT?" AND I RESPOND, "WELL, KNOWLEDGE OF A THING LIKE THAT IS REALLY UNRELATED TO FAITH. FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE ARE JUST NOT TO BE CONSIDERED AS IN THE SAME BALLGAME, AND THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT I SIMPLY TRUST HIM, AND IF I'VE GOT TRUST, THEN I DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT GOING BACK AND RAKING UP ALL OF

HIS PAST AND BEING CONCERNED ABOUT HIS FINANCIAL SHENANIGANS IN DAYS GONE BY." WELL, NOW, IF I HAD MONEY TO INVEST AND IF I THOUGHT LIKE THAT, YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT ERE LONG I WOULD BE PLACED UNDER GUARDIANSHIP AND THAT THOSE WHO THEN HAD CHARGE OF CARING FOR MY FINANCIAL WELFARE WOULD BE MEN WHO HAD BETTER SENSE. BUT THE TRAGEDY OF OUR DAY IS THAT WHEN MEN TALK ABOUT JESUS LIKE THAT SAYING THAT IT REALLY DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE WHETHER WE HAVE KNOWLEDGE OR WHAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE, INSTEAD OF BEING PUT UNDER GUARDIANSHIP THEY ARE USUALLY GIVEN IMPORTANT TEACHING POSITIONS IN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARYS. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT THEY ALSO NEED TO BE PUT UNDER GUARDIANSHIP. FAITH IS RELATED TO KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH IS DEPENDENT UPON THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE IN HIM UPON WHOM THAT FAITH IS RESTING.

3. FAITH IS RELATED TO WILL. WE BELIEVE JUST ABOUT WHAT WE WANT TO BELIEVE. WE TALK ABOUT EVIDENCE, AND EVIDENCE OF FAITH IS A WONDERFUL THING, EVIDENCE OF FAITH IS A NECESSARY THING. BUT MANY OF THE THINGS WE BELIEVE, WE BELIEVE NOT BECAUSE OF EVIDENCE BUT IN SPITE OF EVIDENCE. I READ JUST RECENTLY OF A MAN WHO, WHEN HE WAS A STUDENT AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, WENT TO A PARTY AND THERE AT THE PARTY THERE WAS A MAGICIAN. THE MAGICIAN CALLED FOR SOME VOLUNTEERS FROM THE AUDIENCE. THEY CAME UP AND THE MAGICIAN HANDED THEM A LITTLE BLACK BOX, AND HE GOT THE TWO PEOPLE AND HE SAID, "NOW, YOU PUT YOUR HANDS ON THE SIDES OF THIS BOX." THE MAGICIAN PUT HIS TWO HANDS ON THE REMAINING SIDES AND WHILE THEY HELD THE BOX, THE BOX DISAPPEARED--IT WAS JUST GONE. AND HIS QUERY WAS, "DO YOU BELIEVE THAT I BELIEVE THERE IS A MAN ON THE PRINCETON CAMPUS WHO MAKES LITTLE BLACK BOXES DISAPPEAR?" HE SAID, "NO, I DON'T BELIEVE IT! WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO OUR WORLD IF THERE WERE A MAN WHO COULD MAKE LITTLE BLACK BOXES OR SOMETHING ELSE DISAPPEAR? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO OUR CONCEPTS OF NATURE AND WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE DEPENDABILITY OF THE WORLD OF WHICH WE ARE A PART? NO, I DON'T BELIEVE IT." "WHY?" HE SAID, "BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT!" WHEN WE GET RIGHT DOWN TO THE BASIS OF IT, VERY OFTEN THIS IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH FAITH IS BUILT, EITHER OUR DESIRE TO BELIEVE OR OUR DESIRE NOT TO BELIEVE, AND WHEN WE SAY THAT FAITH IS SIMPLY A MATTER OF EVIDENCE, MEANING BY THAT THAT FAITH IS A MATTER OF EVIDENCE ONLY, WE MISUNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF FAITH. FAITH IS NOT A MATTER OF EVIDENCE ONLY. FAITH IS ALSO A MATTER OF THE WILL.

BUT NOW THE IMPORTANT THING IS FAITH AS IT IS RELATED TO SALVATION. MAY I SUGGEST FOUR POINTS?

1. FAITH HAS A SOURCE. ROMANS 10:17, "FAITH COMES BY HEARING." IN THE CONTEXT PAUL HAD BEEN SPEAKING OF THAT WHICH WAS PREACHED, AND HE REACHED THE END OF THIS DISCUSSION IN THE 17TH VERSE WHERE HE SAID, "FAITH COMES BY HEARING." THE SCRIPTURE, THE WORD OF GOD, IS THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH. THE SCRIPTURE, THE WORD OF GOD, DISCLOSES THE NEEDS OF MAN. THE SCRIPTURE, THE WORD OF GOD, STATES THE PROMISES THAT GOD MAKES TO MAN. THE SCRIPTURE, THE WORD OF GOD, INDICATES THE CONDITIONS WITH WHICH MAN MUST COMPLY IF HE IS TO RECEIVE THE BLESSINGS THAT ARE THERE DESCRIBED. THE SCRIPTURE, THE WORD OF GOD, IS THE ONLY SOURCE WE HAVE IN WHICH THOSE BLESSINGS ARE FOUND. I KNOW THERE ARE SOME WHO SAY, "WELL, THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT FAITHS, AND IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE WHAT A MAN BELIEVES AS LONG AS HE IS HONEST, AS LONG AS HE IS SINCERE." BUT THIS DOES NOT ACCORD WITH THE TEACHING OF GOD'S HOLY WORD. IN EPHESIANS 4:4-6 WE READ WHAT WE SOMETIMES REFER TO AS THE 7 UNITIES OF FAITH OR THE 7 UNITIES OF THE SPIRIT. AMONG THESE UNITIES THERE STANDS THAT GREAT ONE, "THERE IS ONE FAITH." ONE FAITH, NOT A MULTIPLICITY OF FAITHS. NOT YOUR FAITH, NOT MY FAITH, NOT SOMEBODY ELSE'S FAITH. BUT THERE IS ONE FAITH WHICH IS REVEALED IN THE WORD OF GOD. MAY I SUGGEST THAT IF A MAN BELIEVES THERE IS MORE THAN ONE FAITH, THEN LOGICALLY HE HAS NO ARGUMENT AT ALL WITH THE HINDU WHO BELIEVES THERE IS MORE THAN ONE GOD, FOR THE SAME PASSAGE SAYS "THERE IS ONE GOD." IF I OR ANYONE ELSE HAS A RIGHT TO IGNORE THE ONE FAITH, THEN THE HINDU HAS THE RIGHT TO IGNORE THE ONE GOD. THESE THINGS (FAITH AND GOD), STAND OR FALL TOGETHER WITH ALL OF THE OTHER UNITIES. IF THERE CAN BE MORE THAN ONE OF ANY SINGLE ONE OF THEM, THERE CAN BE MORE THAN ONE OF ANY OF THEM, AND WE HAVE LOST BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD. WE HAVE LOST THE FACT THAT THERE IS ONE LORD, THEREFORE, THE FACT THAT THERE IS ONE SAVIOR AND WE MAY DEPEND UPON ANYTHING OR UPON WHOMSOEVER WE WILL IN ORDER TO BE SAVED. THERE IS ONE FAITH. IN I CORINTHIANS 2:5 PAUL SAID THAT HE DID NOT WANT THE FAITH OF THESE CORINTHIAN BRETHREN TO STAND IN THE WISDOM OF MEN. LET NOT THAT BE THE SOURCE OF YOUR FAITH. BUT LET IT STAND IN THE POWER OF GOD. FAITH, SAVING FAITH, BIBLICAL FAITH, HAS A SOURCE AND THAT SOURCE IS GOD'S WORD.

THIS FAITH ALSO HAS AN OBJECT. THIS IS SO IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT IS SOLELY FROM ITS OBJECT THAT FAITH DERIVES ITS VALIDITY, AND IT IS SOLELY FROM THE OBJECT TO WHICH THE FAITH OF A CHRISTIAN IS DIRECTED, EVEN JESUS CHRIST, THAT THE FAITH OF THE CHILD OF GOD HAS ANY VALIDITY AT ALL. FOR YOU SEE, THE SAVING POWER OF OUR FAITH DOES NOT RESIDE IN THE FAITH ITSELF. THERE'S NOTHING IN THE ATTITUDE OF HEART, THERE IS NOTHING IN THE ATTITUDE OF MIND, THERE IS NOTHING IN THE ATTITUDE OF WILL THAT WE DESCRIBE AS FAITH, THAT WE MAY TAKE IT TO THE THRONE OF GOD AND SAY, "GOD, HERE, BECAUSE OF FAITH, YOU OWE ME SOMETHING." THE SAVING POWER OF FAITH DOES NOT RESIDE IN THE FAITH ITSELF. THE SAVING POWER OF FAITH RESIDES IN JESUS CHRIST WHO IS THE OBJECT OF THAT FAITH. IN FACT, IF WE WANT TO BE TECHNICALLY CORRECT, WE MUST PROCEED TO SAY THAT IT IS NOT FAITH THAT SAVES, BUT IT IS FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST THAT SAVES. AND THIS MEANS THAT FAITH IN ANY OTHER SAVIOR, THIS MEANS THAT FAITH IN ANY OTHER PHILOSOPHY, THIS MEANS THAT FAITH IN ANY OTHER CONCEPT, OR HUMAN CONCEIT, OR SCHEME, OR FAITH IN ANY OTHER GOSPEL THAN THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED, BRINGS NOT SALVATION BUT A CURSE UPON HIM WHO CLINGS TO IT. IN FACT, IF WE REALLY, REALLY WANT TO BE TECHNICALLY CORRECT, WE MUST PROCEED A STEP FURTHER AND SAY THAT IT IS NOT EVEN FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST THAT SAVES, BUT IT IS CHRIST WHO SAVES THROUGH FAITH. THE SAVING POWER RESIDES EXCLUSIVELY, NOT IN THE ACT OF FAITH OR THE ATTITUDE OR THE NATURE OF FAITH, BUT THE SAVING POWER RESIDES IN THE OBJECT OF FAITH, THAT IS JESUS CHRIST. IT IS BECAUSE OF CHRIST WHO IS THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH THAT THROUGH THAT FAITH WE CAN BE SAVED.

FAITH AS IT IS RELATED TO SALVATION HAS A PURPOSE. WHAT IS THAT PURPOSE? I WOULD NOT TAKE TIME TO READ THE ENTIRE ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF THE HEBREW LETTER TONIGHT, BUT I WISH WHEN YOU GO HOME THIS EVENING YOU WOULD READ IT. AND I WISH, LOOKING AT THAT CHAPTER, YOU WOULD LOOK AT IT WITH THE QUESTION IN MIND, "WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FAITH? WHAT IS MY FAITH TO DO IN ME AND FOR ME? HOW AM I TO BEHAVE BECAUSE I HAVE FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST?" YOU WILL SEE THAT IT WAS BECAUSE OF FAITH THAT THOSE GREAT MEN OF GOD WERE ABLE TO RELEASE THEIR HOLD ON THE WORLD. YOU WILL SEE THAT IT WAS BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO LOOK UPON THEMSELVES AS STRANGERS AND SO-JOURNERS AND PILGRIMS, DESIRING A BETTER LAND TO WHICH THEY LOOKED AND WHICH BY FAITH THEY SAW. YOU WILL SEE THAT IT WAS BECAUSE OF FAITH THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO BE VICTORIOUS. IT WAS BECAUSE OF FAITH THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO WITHSTAND ALL OF THE ONSLAUGHTS THAT THOSE WHO SURROUNDED THEM IN THE WORLD AND THOSE WHO BELITTLED THEM FOR THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND THOSE WHO SOUGHT TO TURN THEM ASIDE FROM GOD, HEAPED UPON THEM. IT WAS BECAUSE THEY WERE BELIEVERS, IT WAS BECAUSE THEY RELIED CONFIDENTLY IN THEIR TRUST IN GOD, THAT IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE THAT THEY WERE SAWN ASUNDER. IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE THAT THEY WERE AFFLICTED, IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE THAT THEY WERE BEATEN, IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE THAT THEY WERE REJECTED OF MEN.

"...THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, EVEN OUR FAITH," I JOHN 5:4. THAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FAITH. THE PURPOSE OF FAITH IN THE CHILD OF GOD IS NOT ONLY TO LIFT HIM INTO THE BOSOM OF GOD, THE FATHER, BUT IT IS TO LIFT HIM ABOVE THE STORMS OF LIFE SO THAT WHATEVER COMES HIS WAY, WHATEVER DIFFICULTIES HE MAY FACE, WHATEVER PROBLEMS HE MAY HAVE, WHATEVER SUFFERINGS HE MAY BE CALLED UPON TO ENDURE, HE MAY REST SECURELY IN THE HAND OF GOD, HE MAY BE VICTORIOUS, HE MAY SEE THE RESULTS THAT FAITH IS TO HAVE. "RECEIVING THE END OF YOUR FAITH, EVEN THE SALVATION OF YOUR SOULS." I PETER 1:9. THAT IS WHAT FAITH WILL DO FOR YOU. IT WILL LEAD YOU SAFELY THROUGH LIFE AND IT WILL LEAD YOU SAFELY AT LAST INTO THE SAFETY OF THE CITY OF GOD.

"THE END OF YOUR FAITH." FAITH IS NOT MEANINGLESS. FAITH IS NOT PURPOSELESS. FAITH EVER WORKS TOWARD A GOAL. FAITH EVER WALKS IN THE DIRECTION OF JESUS. FAITH EVER LOOKS TO THE CITY OF GOD. AND ONE DAY BY FAITH, A FAITH THAT IS STRONG, A FAITH THAT IS NOT WAVERING, A FAITH THAT RESTS IN JESUS, THOSE WHO HAVE SO BELIEVED WILL BE TAKEN OUT OF THE WORLD AND TAKEN HOME TO THE CITY OF GOD. DO YOU HAVE THAT KIND OF FAITH TONIGHT? IS THERE WITHIN YOU A LIVING, VIBRANT, WHOLE FAITH THAT WILL GIVE YOU THE VICTORY NOW AND THE ETERNAL HOME FOREVERMORE?