

Building a Biblical Faith
Lesson 4 - Let Faith Mold Your Character
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Introduction: What is the basis of the choices you make in your life?

- A. The answer to this question reveals the answer to life itself! **(Rom 12:1-2)**
 - 1. Do you often think of things as being acceptable to God?
 - 2. We are living sacrifices, offering ourselves to God each day. Is it acceptable?
- B. We should view every moment this life as an offering of our hearts to God.
 - 1. What does it mean to be a Christian? **(1 Pt 2:4-5)**
 - 2. Remember that God does not accept most sacrifices offered to Him! We must first look to Him in humility and seek His ways.

I. Our faith must mold us to be like God

- A. We are to be holy because God is holy. **(1 Pt 1: 14-16)**
 - 1. The root idea of holy is to be "set apart" with the idea of perfection and purity.
 - 2. God is the standard of holiness.

"Holy is the way God is. To be holy he does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because he is holy, all his attributes are holy; that is, whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy." - A. W. Tozer

- 3. The only issue at judgement day is the issue of holiness. **(Heb 12:14)**
 - a. Why did Paul write what he did to Christians? **(Eph 5:27; Col 1:21-23)**
 - b. There is a widely accepted form of religion that laughs off any standards as "legalistic" while claiming to serve God. What does God accept?
 - c. Our ability to deal with false doctrine and their movements should be evidence of a desire for holiness. **(2 Cor 11:2-4)**
 - d. We are made holy and then are to live an holy life. **(1 Cor 1:2; 1 Pt 1:2)**
- B. Real change must begin in the heart
 - 1. It is easy to substitute that which man sees for that which God sees. **(2 Cor 10:12,18)**

"Holiness has love for its essence, humility for its clothing, the good of others as its employment, and the honor of God as its end." - Nathanael Emmons

- 2. In the Old Testament we find men who tried to substitute worship for holiness. **(Prov 21:2-3; Jer 6:20-21; Mal 1:8-10,13)**
 - 3. These are the carnal men in the church who view worship as entertainment. They will have many false standards but have no control of their hearts.
 - 4. The battle for holiness can only be fought without watering down the standard.
 - a. The Pharisees even mocked God's standard. **(Lk 16:13-14)**
 - b. It takes great humility to seek God's will without change! Only with this attitude can He bring change to our hearts. **(Prov 16:2; Mt 15:18-19)**
 - c. A holy life will be willing to make great sacrifices. **(Mat 5:28-30; 2 Cor 6:17-7: 1)**

"It is not difficult in our world to get a person interested in the message of the Gospel; it is terrifically difficult to sustain the interest. Millions of people in our culture make decisions for Christ, but there is a dreadful attrition rate. Many claim to have been born again, but the evidence for mature Christian discipleship is slim. In our kind of culture anything, even news about God, can be sold if it is packaged freshly; but when it loses its novelty, it goes on the garbage heap. There is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness." -- A Long Obedience In the Same Direction

5. We find strength in the example of Christ. (**Heb 12:2-4**)

C. Our faith must mold us day by day

1. It takes time to be holy. (**Eph 5:15-17**)

"Although we become Christians instantaneously by faith in Christ, knowing God and developing faith is a gradual process. There are no shortcuts to maturity. It takes time to be holy." - Erwin W. Lutzer

2. The battle to grow in love and to hate sin takes time! Impatience has caused many to quit. (**Heb 10:36-37**)

3. There is also an improper understanding of forgiveness that causes some to be overwhelmed and quit. (**2 Cor 2:7,10-11**)

4. We must have a willingness to study and be corrected. (**1 John 3:1-3**)

a. Many Christians have given in to the "positive Christianity" philosophy.

b. When open study is feared and a proper rebuke despised, we no longer have a desire to be holy.

"Before we can be filled with the Spirit, the desire to be filled must be all-consuming. It must be for the time the biggest thing in the life, so acute, so intrusive as to crowd out everything else. The degree of fullness in any life accords perfectly with the intensity of true desire. We have as much of God as we actually want." - A. W. Tozer

Class Discussion:

1. What is holiness?
2. Why do some Christians accept a standard that is lower than holiness?
3. What do men substitute for holiness?
4. Why is worship important for a people seeking holiness?

II. We must possess a faith that can be tested.

A. God has given His word in such a way that people will react in different ways to the same message! (**Acts 13:48;14:1-2; 28:24-29**)

1. Some doubt that the Bible could be God's word because of the different reactions men have to it.
 2. God told us ahead of time that only a few would find the truth. **(Mt 7:13-14)**
 3. By design God has given a message that would cause the proud to reject it and the humble to find it. **(1 Cor 1:22-29)**
 4. Jesus plainly stated that God's truth must be carefully pursued. **(Jn 7:17; Mt 13:10-15)**
 - a. Potentially anyone can find the truth of God, but those who do will have to dig deep and not be easily discouraged by the tests God gives them.
 - b. Do you have what it takes? Can you find the truth and keep the truth because you have a love for the truth?
- B. In order to believe in Jesus men had to dig deep!**
1. While God gave powerful evidence, there were many who did not believe in Jesus. **(Mt 16:13-16)**
 - a. Jesus did not give men the kind of evidence they demanded but rather gave them sufficient evidence to believe. **(Jn 5:38-40)**
 - b. When men demanded signs, Jesus gave them something else. **(Jn 2:18-22)**
 2. They had to overcome alleged contradictions
 - a. How could Jesus be from Nazareth and still be the Messiah? **(Jn 1:45-46; Mic 5:2)**
 - b. Did Jesus fulfill the prophecy? How would one come to know this?
 - c. Those who are quick to turn away will never find God's truth!
 3. They had to overcome the views of knowledgeable, influential men. **(Jn 7:45-49)**
 - a. These popular men did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.
 - b. How many stopped listening at the words of these men?
 4. They had to "overcome" aspects Jesus teaching and His doing "hard" things.
 - a. Jesus taught without apology in a way to drive off the shallow. **(Jn 6:61-69)**
 - b. Jesus at times responded in a way that would have caused the sensitive to quit. **(Mt 15:22-28)**
 - c. Blessed are those who persist and pass the test of truth.
- C. In order to find the way of salvation ones faith is tested.**
1. While God wants all men to be saved, one must search the scriptures to learn how to be saved. **(1 Tim 2:3-4)**
 - a. Some are confused when they fail to find all requirements of salvation specifically listed in one verse.
 - b. There are very different views that are widely taught that require a careful serious study of God's word.
 2. As a result some will interpret a passage in a way to contradict others.

- a. Some interpret passages that show the necessity of faith in a way that contradicts passages teaching the necessity of baptism. **(Jn 3:16; Acts 2:38)**
- b. Others interpret salvation by grace in such a way to contradict other passages. **(Eph 2:8-9; Jn 6:28-29)**
- 3. One must overcome the beliefs of influential men.
- D. Christians are tested by their willingness to obey
 - 1. Men who begin serving God will face additional tests of their faith.
 - a. Abraham could plainly tell us that. **(Heb 11: 17-19)**
 - b. Abraham was tested and God proclaimed his grade! **(Gen 22:12)**
 - 2. Jesus expects His disciples to follow all things He commands. **(Mt 28:20)**
 - a. He made no exceptions to those who were required to make a great sacrifice. **(Mt 19:20-25)**
 - b. That is a requirement of all who would be His disciple. **(Lk 14:33)**
 - 3. We are tested in our morals. **(Eph 5:3)**
 - a. We must stand against those who approve adulterous marriages.
 - b. Are we afraid of plain, applied preaching?
 - 4. When the world gets into the church we are tested as a local church. **(2 Cor 2:9)**
 - a. We must not let outspoken men cause us to pull back from obeying.
 - b. While conflict may come, we will be faithful to God.
 - c. Do not be dismayed when such tests come! We can pass it. **(Acts 15:1-2, 22)**
- E. We are tested in the furnace of trails
 - 1. God will allow various trials to come into our lives. **(1 Pt 1:6-7; Rev 2:10)**
 - a. This is a test that will bring greater blessings when we pass it. **(Rom 5:3-5)**
 - b. Do you glory in tribulations? **(Phil 1:29-30)**
 - 2. In these tests we must go back to the foundations of why we believe. **(1 Pt 3:15)**
 - 3. What did Jesus do when John the Baptist expressed doubts? **(Mt 11:3-6)**
 - a. We should not become offended at Christ because He allows certain things to come into our lives!
 - 4. Will you pass the tests of God or join the shallow world of unbelievers?
 - a. The response you give will determine what you will allow Christ to become in your life. **(1 Pt 2:4-8)**
 - b. The unbeliever fights God. No man will win that battle.
 - c. The believer will have Jesus as his foundation and builder.

Class Discussion:

1. Why do men have difficulty in knowing God's will?
2. Why do proud men and lazy men fail to see the gospel?
3. What should be our attitude during suffering?
4. What things might God allow into our lives? What limits will God place on these

things?

III. We must allow our faith to change all aspects of our lives.

A. Consider the things we must add to our faith. (2 Pt 1:5-10)

1. It requires diligence - 1) haste, with haste 2) earnestness, diligence 2a) earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything 2b) to give all diligence, interest one's self most earnestly
2. Virtue - 1) a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action I a) virtue, moral goodness 2) any particular moral excellence, as modesty, purity
3. Self-control - 1) self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, esp. his sensual appetites)
4. Perseverance - 1) steadfastness, constancy, endurance I a) in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.
5. Godliness - 1) reverence, respect 2) piety towards God, godliness
6. Brotherly kindness - philadelphia 1) love of brothers or sisters, brotherly love 2) in the NT the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren.
7. Love - agape 1) brotherly love, affection, good will, love, benevolence

B. We must never be satisfied until the word of God becomes a part of us! (Jas 1:21)

1. We must learn meekness. 1) mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness
2. We must want to!

Class Discussion:

1. Can we have a faith to ourselves and not be involved with other people?
2. In what areas must we practice self-control?
3. What is necessary for the word of God to become a part of us?

Shallow Thinking - False Conclusions

Bill Hall

Superficial thinking often leads to false conclusions. This fact is easily illustrated by the Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Christ. We sometimes marvel at their unbelief, but how could they have accepted Him? After all, Jesus had come from Galilee, and the scriptures had plainly stated that the Christ would come from Bethlehem (**John 7:41-42**). And if He really were the Christ, why would He encourage people to break the Sabbath (**Matthew 12:1-13; John 5:1-16**), and even fail to keep it Himself (**John 9:16**)? It was true that Jesus performed great miracles, and His feeding of the five thousand was especially

intriguing, but Moses had fed the Israelites with manna, and he never claimed to have come from God (**John 6:30-31**). And if He really were the Christ, why did He allow sinners to touch Him? Wouldn't He have known what manner of people they were (**Luke 7:39**)? Besides, His death was obvious proof that He was not the Christ, for the law had said that the Christ would live forever (**John 12:34**). Now, if He had suddenly come down from the cross, they would have believed in Him (**Matthew 27:42**), but there He was, "stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted" (**Isaiah 53:4**). He could not have been Christ! of course we can see the fallacy in their thinking. Had they taken the time-and it wouldn't have taken long for all of their objections could have easily been removed, and they could have believed on Jesus as the Christ to the salvation of their souls. But they preferred to hold to their superficial reasoning. They refused to look more deeply into the matter.

We see their mistake repeated again and again in our generation, as people allow superficial objections to prevent them from seeing such things as the necessity of baptism ("What about the thief on the cross?"), or the error of instrumental music ("David worshiped with instruments"), or the wrong of institutionalism ("The Bible doesn't say how"), or the error of infant baptism ("Weren't whole households baptized?"). Then we wonder if some of our own convictions could possibly be founded upon some shallow reasoning which we have heard and accepted at face value. Is it possible that we have failed to dig more deeply into some Bible subject for fear (unconsciously, maybe) that a more thorough study might lead to unpopular conclusions?

The real reasons behind the Jews' rejection of Jesus? (1) They were not concerned for honoring God, but sought for honor among themselves (**John 5:39-47**), and (2) they had blinded eyes and hardened hearts (**John 12:40**). This is frightening! Could such things be true of any of us? The point is this: We can either satisfy ourselves on the basis of superficial thinking or we can seek to honor and please God by opening our eyes and hearts, digging more deeply into His word, and finding a sure foundation on which to build our convictions. It's our choice, but if we are wise, We will dig deep, and lay our foundation on the solid rock of truth.

Truth's Consequences

Bill Hall

The consequences of truth are sometimes bitter. Many a man has lost his job, or home, or friends, or life because of his stand for truth. Many a preacher has been ousted from the pulpit, having neither house nor salary, because he preached the truth. Many a person has had his name slandered and maligned because of truth. With all such people, love for truth is greater than love for comfort, security, or even life itself.

Unfortunate indeed is the man who looks ahead to evaluate the consequences of a position before evaluating the position itself. Such a man will rarely come to a knowledge of truth. His thoughts concerning "What will my wife think?" or "Where will I preach?" or "Won't I be condemning my good mother to hell?" or "How will I explain my change to good ole Brother Jones?" or "How will I support my family?" or "Everybody will think I'm crazy," may well blind his mind to whatever evidence is at hand. The man who really demonstrates a love for truth is the man who studies, every subject objectively and then lets the consequences-whether they be good or bad-take care of themselves.

Unfortunate too is the man who complains and grieves over the consequences of truth, for truth must bring joy to the heart, whatever may be its consequences. Self-pity may lead one to "sell the truth" and to profane this precious commodity. If pity is to be felt, it must be felt for that person who has never suffered the consequences of truth, for such a man has obviously loved the praises of men more than the praises of God.

No men ever felt the consequences of truth to a greater degree than did the apostles, but they faced all such consequences "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (**Acts 5:41**). Worthy! There's the key! The man who lets a fear of consequences dictate his position on every question never suffers, for he is not worthy to suffer. Pity him! But the person who stands for truth regardless of the consequences shall suffer, for he is worthy to suffer. Rejoice with him!

What a difference between the man who is "heaven" oriented and that one who is "this world" oriented!