

Audio Transcript of Sermon
January 4, 2020
Faith

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. Last week as we concluded 2019, we considered attitudes for a new year and we finished by reading verses from second Peter chapter one. That's where we are going to start this week. Let's start by taking a look at second Peter one verse one.

2 Peter 1:1-10

- 1. Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:**
- 2. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,**
- 3. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:**
- 4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**

Because we are called of God and have a relationship with Jesus Christ, we live a life that is a spiritual existence living within this physical body. That means more so than people who only live within a physical body who know only lust, we have the spiritual relationship with God and Jesus Christ that is based on faith. Faith is the foundation of everything that we do. With the idea of faith in 2020, we're also going to in future weeks looking at virtue, in verse five where it says,

- 5. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;**
- 6. And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;**
- 7. And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.**
- 8. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

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9. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

It's one thing to be called of God and to have a spiritual existence based on faith, but what Peter tells us in this section of his second epistle is that beyond faith, we have to add many, many more things. But the foundation of what it is we need to do is faith and when we consider faith, we sometimes overlook the very basic essence and concept of faith. For instance, what exactly is faith? That's a concept that is very well defined for us in Hebrews chapter eleven. Let's take a look at Hebrews chapter eleven beginning with verse one.

Hebrews 11:1-40

1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

In verse one we have a great definition. Faith are things and basis of what we hope for. And it's also based on something we have not yet seen. So when we have faith of our resurrection and the future coming Kingdom of God, these are things we hope for, we have not yet seen them with our own eyes. That's the definition we are given of with faith in Hebrews eleven. Verse three.

3. 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.

We understand the miraculous creation of the universe and the world in which we live, and the hand of God in the creation of everything that we know through our five senses. Verse four.

4. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

There was this huge rivalry between Abel and Cain and what we're told here in verse four is that Abel acted out of faith, whereas Cain did not. Verse five.

5. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

It was through faith that God spared Enoch from death. Verse six.

6. 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.

We have to have faith in our relationship with God because God is the author and creator of everything we see and yet God is not somebody that we see and touch with our physical eyes, so there is this element of faith in everything we do, and God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. It's not enough to be a half-hazard Christian, we have to diligently seek God in everything we do. Let's look at verse seven.

7. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

So, imagine you are Noah and you are told by God to build this ark when there would be no need for this big boat to be built. Noah was a man who followed through with what he was told even though he likely faced ridicule, scorn, and condemnation from those who knew him. Faith requires us to put God first and Jesus Christ first above any people in our life. Let's consider Abraham. Verse eight.

8. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

So, when Abraham left his home country to go to the area we now know as Israel, he left without the modern conveniences and knowledge that we would have if we left on a journey today. If I'm going to Israel today, I'm pulling up a lot of information on the internet, social media; I'm going to have a good idea of where

I'm going and what I'm going to be doing when I am there. Abraham had none of that. He went out in faith trusting God. Verse nine.

**9. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:
10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**

Abraham left his home country looking for this New Jerusalem that we think of and that we have beautifully described for us in the latter chapters of the Book of Revelation. Abraham had faith in God that this would happen. Verse eleven.

11. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Sara was a very old lady when she had Isaac, and she did not believe she could have children. It was an act of faith that caused that.

12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

Through faith, the children of Israel became a nation.

13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The last time I looked at a country afar off was when I was traveling through the U.S. state of Washington looking across the body of water into what would be part of Canada. That was miles and miles and miles away. That's the closest I've had to that and yet in verse thirteen we are told that people died in faith having not yet received the promises only looking at them afar off.

14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

When we are called by God and given this opportunity to know God and Jesus Christ through faith, we cannot go back to our prior existence. There is this story from the Book of Genesis. Lot's wife looked back and God turned her into this pillar of salt. When we are called by God we have one direction to move and that's forward in life, looking forward to this promise that is afar off. Verse sixteen.

16. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

17. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

So, imagine you have a child that is miraculously born to you through your wife who is very old and as that child grows and matures, God gives you this direction to offer your son as a burnt offering and a sacrifice. Verse eighteen.

18. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham knew that God would deliver on his promise, no matter how much God would try him. Verse twenty.

20. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

22. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Verse twenty-three.

23. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

- 24. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;**
- 25. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;**
- 26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.**
- 27. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.**
- 28. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.**

Every story that we read in the Old Testament can be looked at as a story of faith, and as we read these stories of the patriarchs of the Bible, and if you read them carefully and honestly, you see that these are people who were people of faith; they were also people who were very much like you and me, very frail as a person, very vulnerable to all of the emotions, concerns, and fears that people naturally have in their life. And yet, they listened to God, they obeyed God, they are people of faith. Verse twenty-nine.

29. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

It would take an incredible act of faith to walk through this dry area of ocean wondering when the waters might come crashing down on you. There are many thoughts as to how this happened. What we know from the Bible is that Moses stretched out his hands over the sea and God caused the sea to recede by a strong east wind. So there was wind that caused that event, and that's what the Bible records for us. But it was an act of faith that allowed all of that to happen because the people would not have believed God, they would have stayed right there on the shore of the Red Sea, they would have been captured and killed by the Egyptians. The Egyptians followed the children of Israel into the Red Sea and as soon as the Children of Israel made it to the other side, the Egyptians were drowned because they did not have the faith in God as the children of Israel had.

As the children of Israel wandered around in the desert they came across different cities including the city of Jericho. Let's look at verse thirty.

30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

31. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

The children of Israel were given specific instructions about what to do with Jericho including marching about the city seven days, and after that the city fell. Rahab the harlot was spared because of her faith. She received the spies with peace when the others living within the city would have slaughtered the spies.

There are many, many, many more stories we can examine and all of these stories from the Old Testament, and even stories from the New Testament, can be looked at from this lens of faith. Verse thirty-two.

32. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38. Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

When we read Hebrews eleven, and we're reminded of all these acts of faith, we need to be mindful of how our actions might be thought of in the future. There will be this future time of judgment, judgment may now be on the house of God, but this judgment will be rendered at this future date. What will God and Jesus Christ say of our actions today? Will our actions today be thought of as acts of faith, or will our actions today be thought of as acts of disbelief? We need to make sure what we do in life is based in faith.

Faith is based in belief. It's based in belief of things we hope for, that we do not see. That's what Hebrews eleven one tells us. Let's consider what John wrote in his first epistle. Let's look at first John chapter one beginning with verse one. First John chapter one verse one.

1 John 1:1-5

1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

If we believe that Jesus is our savior, that is the bottom element of faith this is required of salvation. We are in this case born of God, and born in the sense of being begotten of God awaiting our resurrection, and everyone that loveth him who begat, and the person being described here who begat is God, *loveth him also that is begotten of him*. So if we believe Jesus is our Messiah, we have to love God the Father as well as Jesus Christ. We cannot love one or the other, while ignoring the other party. So, we have to love both God and Jesus Christ and recognize that Jesus is our savior. Verse two.

2. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

3. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

There's this whole thought with Christianity that we can toss out the commandments of God, and yet that thought is contradicted by these verses. We love the children of God, we love Jesus Christ, we love God and keep His commandments. And so in other words, in order to love Jesus Christ and other Christians, we have to love God and keep His commands, and loving God is demonstrated in verse three by keeping His commandments. Verse four.

4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Nothing else helps us to overcome the world, but our faith. Everything begins with faith. In the end when we overcome the world, it is because of our faith. We are not overcome by this world, we do not succumb to the evils of this world. Faith is our anchor that we can latch onto in a rough sea. Faith is a guide post as we walk through life, and as long as we see that guide post of faith we know where we are in relationship to our calling. Faith is not something that we can ignore. Salvation does not come simply to us because we are more stubborn than the evils of this world. We are saved because of our faith, and our ability to understand that Jesus is our Messiah and savior, and that we love God and keep His commandments. Verse five.

5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Without understanding that Jesus is the son of God, that Jesus is the Messiah, that he is our Savior, there is no opportunity for us to overcome this world, there would be no opportunity for us to be spiritually saved.

When we think of being saved, we think of it as the righteous who are saved. Righteousness comes through faith. There is nothing we do of any by ourselves that is righteous. We might be a good person according to this world, the way the world evaluates good and evil. But the way the world evaluates good and evil in no way makes us righteous or unrighteous in the eyes of God. Only God and through our relationship with Jesus Christ can evaluate if we are living a righteous life. Let's take a look at what Paul wrote to the Romans in Romans ten verse one, Romans ten verse one.

Romans 10:1-21

- 1. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.**
- 2. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.**

3. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

In these first few verses of Romans ten, Paul tells us that we cannot make ourselves righteousness based on our own standards, or the standards of society, or even the standards that a “church” might impose. God’s standards of righteousness is based on faith in Jesus Christ and anything else is phony. Verse five.

5. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

In the Old Testament under the law of God, if you wanted to be saved, you had to do everything in the commandments, in the sacrifices, in the ordinances, because if you didn’t do one of those things, you could not be saved. The relationship with Jesus Christ took away the penalty from all of those ceremonial obligations because Jesus Christ died once for all. Verse six.

6. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

7. Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

8. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9. That 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.

10. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Those who believe that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior will be saved. That’s what these verses are saying. It is not our place as Christians to judge others. Obviously as first-century apostolic Christians, we follow a faith that we believe is very much aligned to what would have been followed by the apostles in the first century. We are not here to condemn or judge other Christians who would

believe differently than we would believe. We are not in a position to judge any person because verse eleven says, *Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*. And we are nobody to contradict what is written in the Bible. Verse twelve.

12. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Again, we have this promise of salvation for all people. When God worked with the children of Israel in the time period we would call the Old Testament, He was only working with the children of Israel, and when Jesus Christ died salvation opened up for all people. Let's look at verse fourteen.

14. 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?

15. 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!

16. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

The children of Israel rejected God. That's why there were so many punishments they went through in captivities. Verse seventeen.

17. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

You can't have faith in God unless somehow you have heard about God. That's a very natural progression. Verse eighteen.

18. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

19. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

20. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

21. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

In the New Testament, during the time of His ministry there came a time when Jesus healed a boy who had a demon, and there is the story of the mustard seed within that story that is used as an example of faith. Let's take a look at that story as Matthew recorded it in Matthew chapter seventeen beginning with verse fourteen, Matthew seventeen verse fourteen.

Matthew 17:14-21

14. And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

15. Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

16. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

17. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

18. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

So, here was a person who acted very unusually. This was somebody who fell into the fire, fell into water and according to the story this was caused not because of any type of mental illness, but because of demonic possession, and the disciples weren't able to cast out this demon, and Jesus very quickly was able to cast out the demon. It happened that very same hour in verse eighteen. Let's look at verse nineteen.

19. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

So, they had been with Jesus. They knew how Jesus operated, and yet, they, themselves, could not cast out the demon, and notice what Jesus told them in verse twenty.

20. And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief:

The disciples lacked faith.

for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

The disciples lacked faith to cast out the demon. They knew what to do, to pray, the words to say, but they did not believe that they could actually cast out the demon. And then, notice verse twenty-one.

21. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Sometimes, our faith requires us to take additional actions. Prayer and fasting are spiritual tools that we can use to draw closer to God, and the disciples were not sufficiently close to God to have the faith that was necessary to cast out the demon in this particular story from the time of Jesus' ministry. Faith requires action on our part and that's also another thread and segment we see in the New Testament. Let's look at first Corinthians chapter two verse one. And, what this section of first Corinthians tells us is that what we do in faith has to be based on the power of God. What we do in faith is never based on the wisdom of men. Let's notice verse one.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

1. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

So, Paul did not consider himself to be the greatest speaker. He didn't consider himself to be the wisest person when he came to declare the testimony of God.

2. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

4. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

There are many fantastic ministers who can use the most wonderful words and phrases to suck people in, and people are not being sucked in to the power of faith, they are not being sucked into the wisdom that is of God. Instead, they're

being sucked in to the wisdom of man that is personified in the person that they are listening to. It's incumbent upon each of us to make sure that when we are hearing the word of God, that we are hearing the word of God as the Bible would have us hear the word of God, and not by any man. Verse five.

5. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

When we read the Bible, when we think of faith, it is always based on the power of God. It is not based on what any man will say.

Today we have been talking about faith and the importance of faith in our life. Is faith sufficient for salvation? Let's consider what James wrote in his epistle. James may be one of the epistles that is towards the end of the New Testament, but chronologically, it was one of the first epistles written after the time of Jesus. Let's take a look at James two, verse fourteen, James two, verse fourteen.

James 2:14-26

14. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

That's a great question. Let's look at an example that James gives in verse fifteen.

15. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16. And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

Verse seventeen.

17. Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Many people will look at verses fifteen through seventeen and think that faith requires us to always serve other people and to give of ourselves to other people. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that, and as much as we are able to help other people, that is what we are to do. But, verses fifteen, sixteen, seventeen are given to us as an example, if you will, the story to teach us a lesson, but it is not

the lesson itself. What's most important is verse seventeen, *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*. If we have faith, we are going to do something with that faith. What is it we are going to do? It's called works. Verse eighteen.

18. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

What are works? The Greek word for works is *ergon* from which we would get the word *ergonomics* which is the study of efficiency in a work environment. Works are things we do and through context, we'll take a look at exactly what the people did that were considered works. Sometimes, people think works are sacrificing yourself and totally serving other people. There is nothing wrong with that and that can fit within the definition of works. There's much more to that. Verse nineteen.

19. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Having faith that there is God isn't sufficient because the demons also believe.

20. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

So, do you notice Abraham was given a command to offer his son upon the altar and Abraham obeyed. Abraham had obedience. Let's look at verse twenty-three.

23. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

25. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

26. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things we have not seen. We know that the stories of the Old Testament are there and can be looked at to see how faith played an important part in the lives of the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Old Testament. We know that it is our faith in Jesus Christ that will help us overcome the world. We also know that faith is the very baseline in our relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father, and that faith without works is dead. We know as we grow in faith we will add other elements to our Christian life. We'll look at those other elements in the next several weeks.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.