

Growing in Faith

As we begin this year, we should resolve to grow in faith. Where we are today is directly related to the faith we've had to this point, and anything we hope to accomplish in the future will be determined by the faith we have now and going forward. In this session we will talk about what faith requires.

1. Faith requires believing. (Heb. 11: 6)

God takes pleasure in our believing. He is grieved by our doubt (Matt. 17: 17; Heb. 10: 38). If we want more of God's blessing and favor, it will require a greater level of believing. In order to grow in believing, we must grow in our conviction and understanding.

In Heb. 11: 1 we are told that faith is the evidence of things not seen. The word translated "evidence" is the word *elanchos*, which means conviction or assurance. This means faith at its core is a conviction, and as this conviction grows, faith grows. This conviction or assurance can increase when our understanding increases.

In verse 3 we are told the following:

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."

There are two important things to understand here. First, the worlds were formed at God's spoken word. The message here is that it's never about what we see. It's about what God says. This is because what God says created what we see, it upholds what we see (Heb. 1: 3), and it changes what we see.

Second, in this verse we are told that the things seen are not made from things that are visible. This means that there's an invisible realm. There's always something we can't see controlling something we can. So if we want to change

what's visible, we have to pursue it in the Spirit first, *then* in the natural. This requires believing prayer.

2. Faith requires speaking. (Matt. 21: 21-22)

We must speak to **the situation**, to **the Lord**, and to **ourselves**.

In this passage Jesus tells that if we have faith, and if we don't doubt, we can speak to things that oppose God's will. This is speaking to the situation. We can give the object an instruction, as we would someone we have authority over. Be clear that we don't speak in our own power, but in His. According to Jesus, we have delegated authority, and He expects us to use it.

We are also told in verse 22 that we are to ask in prayer. As mentioned above, this means believing prayer. We are to come boldly to the throne of grace (Heb. 4: 16). When we speak to the Lord He is expecting us to believe. He wants us to believe. When we do, according to this verse, we will receive.

And as David strengthened himself in the Lord (I Sam. 30: 6), so we must strengthen ourselves by reminding ourselves what God says and speaking it over ourselves. Remind yourself of God's power and His faithfulness (Jer. 32: 17). With your words exalt Him over your situation.

3. Faith requires hearing. (Rom. 10: 17)

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Jesus taught us to have ears to hear. If we do, we will be given a greater ability to hear and understand (Mk. 4: 23-25). The hearing process means we must stay under the word and build our faith. This means listening to anointed people speaking what the Holy Spirit is saying (I Cor. 2: 13).

We must also stay in the word. This means our own consistent study of scripture, and meditating the word regularly (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1: 2). Then, as we receive it into our hearts, we must obey the word (Lk. 11: 28; John 13: 17).

4. Faith requires waiting. (Heb. 6:12, 10: 36)

Jesus gives us a parable in Mark 4: 26-29 of how the kingdom of God works. It begins with scattering seed. This is sowing God's word into our hearts and lives. Once we do, we wait. As we rise by day and sleep by night, the seed is growing.

We have to trust God during these times of waiting, and continue to water the seed with our prayer and confession of faith in point 2 above. We have to protect the seed and not allow the devil to steal it from our hearts by planting worry, fear and doubt (Mk. 4: 15).

We will then begin to see the rewards of our faith and waiting. "The earth yields crops by itself. First the blade, then the head, then the full grain in the head" (v. 28). Sometimes we receive a miraculous answer in a moment, but often the answer comes in stages. As it does, continue to give God praise for every stage, and when the time comes, we will reap the harvest (v. 29).

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." (Gal. 6: 9)

