

“Trust the Lord’s Faithfulness”
(Hebrews 11:1, 6)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

We’ve been considering *that Satan attacks prayer*:

The kind that honors the Lord:

Prayer that is affectionate –

That comes from a heart that loves God –

That is thankful –

That takes time to remember

All the good/kind things the Lord has done –

That is aimed at holiness –

That spends time reflecting

On how we’ve behaved,

And confesses and repents,

Wanting to be more like Him –

Prayer that puts Him first –

How people treat Him –

His honor –

And how they treat each other –

His kingdom –

And ourselves second –

Our needs, our wants –

Our daily bread.

The devil hates this kind of prayer

Because this is how Jesus prayed –

This was one of the reasons

Jesus was the kind of person He was –

Devoted, holy, full of love and mercy –

Because He spent time with His Father

Who is all these things:

Good company encourages good morals.

It's why He was able to do what He did –

Serve His Father,

And His disciples –

And why He was able to move the kingdom forward

Through His service –

Because He prayed that this would happen.

Satan knows that *if we pray like Jesus,*

We'll become more like Him,

Live more like Him,

Ask more for what He wants,

And that will bring his kingdom down.

We also saw that the devil

Has ways of discouraging our prayers:

He uses God's sovereignty against us:

He tries to deceive us into thinking

That our prayers don't matter:

That God will do

What He's planned to do anyway.

That isn't true:

If it was, Jesus would never have told us to pray,

Or how to pray;

He wouldn't have sent us on a fool's mission.

God is sovereign;

He does have a plan;

But that plan *includes* our prayers:

They are just as present with Him from all eternity,

As everything else He's planned to do.

B. Preview.

Today, let's consider another way

The devil tries to discourage us from praying:

By attacking our faith –

By trying to make us believe that God doesn't exist,

And if He does, that He won't answer our prayers.

This morning, we'll look at:

What faith is,

And why we need it.

This evening,

How the devil attacks it,

And how we can overcome him.

II. Sermon.

A. So first, what is faith?

The word is used in two different ways in Scripture.

It can refer to *what* we are to believe to be saved –

To the content of the Gospel –

What we need to share with others if they would be saved –

To the Christian faith;

The *faith* we are to proclaim;

The *faith* we are to defend:

Jude writes, “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for *the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints*” (1:3).

But it’s also an active word –

That can refer to the *act* of believing –

What we mean when we say:

That we’re justified by grace *through faith* alone.

This faith goes beyond believing the facts:

It looks to Jesus for forgiveness,

And for His perfect righteousness,

To make us acceptable to the Father:

As Paul writes to the Philippians, “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the Law*, but that which is *through faith in Christ*, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith” (Phil. 3:8-9).

It is a faith that God alone gives:

Paul, “For by grace you have been saved *through faith*; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

That He creates by His Spirit –

Usually when the Gospel is shared:

When Jesus told Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5),

He meant our hearts must be changed by His Word and Spirit.

The Westminster Assembly writes, “The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word: by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened” (WCF 14.1).

But this faith does more than justify us:

Westminster goes on to say, “By this faith, a Christian believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acts differently upon that which each particular passage thereof contains; yielding *obedience* to the commands, *trembling* at the threatenings, and *embracing* the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace” (14.2).

It enables us believe what God says in His Word –

To take His commandments seriously,

His threats,

And His *promises*.

Faith takes God at His Word –

Particularly in those things we can’t see –

Because most of the Christian life is like this –

And responds accordingly:

Hebrews, “Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things *not seen*” (11:1).

B. Why do we need faith?

The author goes on to tell us:

“And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (v. 6).

We need it, because:

Without it, we can't please Him –

Because we won't believe He exists,

And so won't come to Him

To ask and receive what we need.

It's true – as Paul tells us in Romans 1 –

Everyone knows He exists –

But that isn't what the author's saying.

He's telling us

That we need a faith that sees Him clearly,

And that trusts Him to provide what He's promised –

That believes He will.

Remember, why the author was writing:

His Jewish audience was being tempted

To leave the more spiritual Christian faith,

To go back to the more tangible Jewish faith,

Because of the Roman persecution against the Christians.

They were being tempted to abandon Jesus –

Asking whether it was really worth what they had to suffer –

Not seeing Him or what He promised.

They needed faith –

Faith to hold fast the God's promises –

As their forefathers had done –

The heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11 –

If they were to inherit.

The author is inviting them to ask

Why those they admired were able to do what they did:

Why Abel offered a sacrifice that pleased God –

One that looked forward to Jesus –

And entered into heaven, when Cain didn't;

Why Enoch lived a life

That was so pleasing to God

That He took him out of this world and to heaven early;

Why Noah spent a hundred years building an ark,

To avoid a danger he didn't see.

Why Abraham left his home and his family

To go to a land he had never seen;

How Sarah was able to conceive a child at 90;

Why Abraham was willing to sacrifice the child

For which he had waited so many years;

Why Joseph gave instruction about what to do with his remains

When God would lead them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land;

Why Moses gave up the riches of Egypt

To lead God's people to the land He had promised;

How Israel was able to make it safely through the Red Sea,

While the Egyptians drowned;

How Joshua was able to destroy

The impregnable walls of Jericho;

How Rahab survived the destruction of Jericho, when everyone else perished?

And we could go on:

Why didn't the three Jews bow down to the statue?

How were they able to survive the furnace?

How did Daniel survive the night in the den of lions?

How was Jesus able to complete the mission

God sent Him into the world to do?

How did the apostles overcome their fear

And evangelize Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria?

How was Paul able to bring the Gospel

Almost to the entire world in his lifetime?

The answer is: they all believed God.

They were confident that He would do what He said.

Why do we need faith?

Why do we need to take Him at His Word –

Believe He will do as He said?

Because,

Without this trust, we can't be saved;

And without it, we won't receive what He's promised.

What James wrote regarding wisdom

Is true for anything we ask from God:

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (1:5-8).

We need faith if we're to receive anything from God.

Is it any wonder that this is what the devil attacks?

That's what we'll consider tonight.

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