FAITH TOWARD GOD

Introduction

The last lesson examined the first foundational stone mentioned in Hebrews 6:1-3 “repentance from dead works”. As God grants us repentance we turn from the world toward God. These first two foundation stones are tied together by these prepositions: “from” and “toward”. It is “repentance from” and “faith toward”.

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. (Hebrews 11:6 NASB)

Faith is the beginning point with God. Without it, we are unable to please Him. As a matter of fact, without faith we have no motivation to please Him because we don't see any value in doing so. We need to believe that there is value, a reward, in seeking God.

Definition of Faith

Sometimes, we seem to have a rather vague definition of faith, a kind of nebulous something that some people have and others don't. Usually, we confuse faith and hope, which are two different things. Many people will say that they have faith when really all that they have is hope.

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

Faith has spiritual substance, which is strong enough that we hold on to it as evidence of things that we can't see with our physical eyes. It is based on the eternal, invisible truths and realities revealed by God's Word and not on our physical senses.

Paul shows the contrast between the objects of faith and the objects of sense perception when he says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Our senses deal with things that are material, temporary, and changeable; whereas, faith deals with the revealed truths of God which are invisible, eternal, and unchangeable. Our faith is not based on what we see and experience but instead on God's Word. Thereafter, that which we see or experience is the outcome of that which we have already believed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAITH</th>
<th>HOPE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Established in the present</td>
<td>Directed toward the future</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance, confidence, something real &amp; definite in us that we possess here and now</td>
<td>Expectancy of things to be</td>
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Anchored in the heart | Anchored in the mind
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Function of the Spirit | Function of the soul

for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:10 NASB)

When it is associated with the heart, “believe” becomes a verb of motion. Heart faith produces a definite change. The translation here is important: “resulting in righteousness” is to believe in a way that produces a transformation of habits, character, and life.

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in [literally “into”] God, believe also in [literally “into”] Me. (John 14:1 NASB)

The verb phrase “to believe” is associated with a process of change or motion. It is not enough to believe “in” Christ with a mental acceptance of the facts of His life or the truths of His teaching, but, we must believe “into” Christ with a heartfelt faith.

Faith is always present tense and because of present faith we have a serene hope, a sure confidence concerning the future. Hope based on this kind of faith will stand the test of death and eternity.

Faith is both a gift and a fruit. As a gift, we can receive it instantly from the Spirit of God. However, as a fruit, it must be grown, which takes time.

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (Romans 12:3 NASB)

Faith begins in God. He gives a measure to us. We then are responsible for growing faith from this seed which God has given. Some, however, allow the seed of faith to be lost, stolen, or otherwise become non-productive.

...and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. (2 Thessalonians 3:2 NASB)

Paul says to the Romans that God has given a measure of faith to all, and, yet, he later says to the Thessalonians that not all have faith. It is obvious then that some lose the faith that has been given. Since we receive this seed faith from God, we have to make sure that it is planted in good soil and that it has an opportunity to sprout, grow and mature into full-grown fruit. This is a process that takes time. We don't have “instant” fruit in the Kingdom of God.

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. (Colossians 2:6-8 NASB)

This verse also points out the things which can spoil your faith—cause it to rot on the vine: philosophy
(world view), empty deception (pride of life), traditions of men, and rudiments of the world (worldly elements and principles).

The scriptures give us the methodology to increase our faith.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17 NASB)

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. (Jude 1:20 NASB)

**Faith and the Law**

It is faith which justifies us and gives us access to the grace of God not the keeping of the law.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2 NASB)

Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM." (Galatians 3:11-12 NASB)

While not by the law, besides faith we are justified by grace (Rom. 3:24), by the blood of Jesus (Rom. 5:9), by the resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 4:25), and by works (James 2:24).

The law is a tutor (that is, teacher) to bring us to the place of faith in Christ.

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:23-26 NASB)

The law had taught the Jews the elements of obedience to God, but for the Gentiles, it was not necessary that the law be observed for justification. It was decided by the Council of Jerusalem that it was necessary for the Gentiles to only observe four key elements.

"Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. (Acts 15:19-20 NASB)

Notice that each of these deals with us keeping ourselves pure.

**Faith and Confession**

Faith requires verbalization. We speak what we believe.
But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:8-10 NASB)

We cannot keep our faith secret if we want it to be active.

"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:32 NASB)

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (1 John 4:15 NASB)

When we have active faith it naturally produces an outflow of works based on that faith.

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (James 2:14-18 NASB)

The works of faith mature and complete our faith.

You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:22-26 NASB)

Without works, faith itself will die. It is faith expressed in works which keeps faith alive in us.

Faith is rooted in our belief in Jesus as the Son of God and should find full expression in our daily lives. God is not only our God but also our Father and Jesus is our Elder Brother. If we truly believe this then our daily walk will also express our faith in this fact. Faith will cause us to enter into His Rest.