

- ***READ Hebrews 11:1-6*** I greatly appreciate the positive comments I received from last week's lesson regarding baptism and salvation and whether or not baptism is the cause of salvation or whether it simply correlates with it as the point in time in which one's sins are forgiven. I thought the argument from brother Doy Moyer was extremely compelling, and I am glad to know that it helped a number of you to have another good way to talk about that subject with your family and friends.
- There was one point that Doy made that I didn't address in the lesson, but I feel compelled to share it with you this morning based upon the fact that a brother shared a sermon manuscript from many decades ago in which this particular point was also made. The point being made in the more recent article as well as in the much older article centers around a particular aspect of faith that is seen in this text we just read together.
- This text gives us a number of noteworthy descriptions of the faith that we possess concerning our belief in God. It firstly tells us that our faith is the reality or confidence of things we hope for though they are things we have not yet seen. Further, that faith is real to us because of the evidence of those unseen things. Though we have not seen God, we believe that He is based upon what we see all around us. Additionally, we are told that the same faith we possess is the same faith that was possessed by our ancestors who were found approved by God. Our ancestors such as Abel and Enoch were both approved by God because of their faith, and that faith is vitally important because we cannot please God unless we truly believe in who He is and what He desires to do for us.
- This might all sound simple enough until we consider the truth that our faith really demands a great deal of trust in God. Trust, as the text tells us, that He is and that He rewards those who seek Him. Now, it would be nice if everything that God told us to do was super easy and made a ton of sense. However, we have to recognize that the Bible shows us without a shadow of a doubt that God isn't afraid to tell those who seek Him to do things that simply don't make all that much sense. This is the point that was brought up by brother Doy and also J.Z. Tyler in his sermon from days gone by. This morning, I would like to take some time to look at a number of Biblical examples of people who were told to trust and obey in God even when the circumstances were not ideal or up to snuff as far as we might think as humans, and then I would like to show how these same truths remain for us as faithful people of God who continue to strive to believe and trust in Him today in 2020.

I. There are a number of examples in the Bible where God commanded people to do things that:

A. were to be done for no other reason than simply because God told them to do it.

1. One of the major pillar stories of the Bible is found in **Genesis 12** when we are introduced to the man we will come to know as Abraham. This man, addressed as Abram at the time, was originally from Ur of the Chaldeans, but his father Terah plans to take him and his family into the land of Canaan, but they end up stopping short and settle in the area of Haran which is far northeast of Canaan. (**Genesis 11:31**) It is at the point of **Genesis 12:1** that God comes to Abraham and tells him that He wants for him to finish the original plan of Terah and make his way down to the land of Canaan. Yes, God shares blessings that would come to Abram, but the point remains that God simply said, "Go" and Abram was willing to obey the Lord's command by uprooting his family and moving far away from the rest of his relatives besides the family of Lot.
2. Another such story can be found in **Isaiah 20** where God tells His prophet Isaiah to "**Go, take off your sackcloth and remove the sandals from your feet,**" (**Isaiah 20:2**) We are able to see that this was all done as a sign against Egypt and Cush, but all Isaiah seems to know at the time is that this was the will of God, and he was willing to obey this strange command.
3. As if such a strange story could be topped...consider another strange command that was given by God to another of His prophets, Jeremiah. In **Jeremiah 13**, Jeremiah is told by God to, "**Go and buy yourself a linen undergarment and put it on. But do not put it in water.**" *So I bought underwear as the Lord instructed me and put it on. Then the word of the Lord came to me a second time: "Take the underwear that you bought and are wearing, and go at once to the Euphrates and hide it in a rocky crevice."* *So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. A long time later*

the Lord said to me, "Go at once to the Euphrates and get the underwear that I commanded you to hide there." So I went to the Euphrates and dug up the underwear and got it from the place where I had hidden it, but it was ruined—of no use at all." (**Jeremiah 13:1-7**) Why would Jeremiah be willing to do such a crazy thing? Surely it must have been because he trusted God and would do whatever He said simply because He said that it needed to be done.

B. seemingly have no connection between what has been commanded and what will be the result.

1. We have two instances from the life of Moses where God tells him to interact with rocks in order for water to flow from them so that the Israelites would have something to drink. At Horeb, Moses is told to hit the rock (**Exodus 17:6**), and at Kadesh he is told to speak to the rock. (**Numbers 20:8**) No right thinking person would think that such a thing would bring forth the desired result, but Moses was willing to listen and trust God in the first instance before losing his cool and disobeying in the second instance.
2. In the early stages of Israel's conquest into Canaan, they come upon the great city of Jericho with its strongly fortified walls that no one believed could be breached. (**Joshua 6**) Instead of the Lord giving the people a time tested battle strategy to bring down the wall, He tells them to march around the city as an army one time each day for six days. He then tells them on the seventh day to march around seven times, to have the priests blow trumpets, and for the soldiers to shout. The Lord said that doing such a thing would bring the walls down, which no one would ever think would be the case, but they trust God, obeyed His plan, and the walls came tumbling down just as the Lord said it would.
3. We can also read in **II Kings 5** about a man named Naaman who was the commander of the army of Aram/Syria. He was a valiant man according to the Bible and God even gave him victories, but he had a skin disease which many believed to have been leprosy and many Bibles translate the text to express such. He is told by a servant girl to seek out the help of a prophet of God in Israel, and he agrees to go do that. God's prophet Elisha sends Naaman a messenger who informs him that he needs to wash seven times in the Jordan River in order for his disease to go away. Naaman is initially resistant because there is no way washing in a dirty river like the Jordan would result in such a healing, but he eventually complies and he ends up being healed.

C. simply don't add up to human wisdom & reasoning.

1. We might be able to also lump Naaman's story into this section, but for sure we can include the story of Noah and the building of his ark. Noah is spoken in **Genesis 6** as the only righteous man in the whole world, and for that he is granted mercy from God in the form of being delivered from the worldwide flood that was to come upon the earth to cleanse it of the pervasive sin that was upon it. The process of Noah being saved wasn't going to be easy. He had to put much time and effort into building a sea-worthy vessel that would house not only himself, but also two of every kind of animal, and he had to do all of this without seeing the first sign of evidence that a worldwide flood was going to happen. Human wisdom would say to see a little evidence first, but Noah instead trusted in God and obeyed His instructions.
2. Going back to Abraham, we can consider another major part of his story that centered around a son that was promised to him by God. This might not seem all that incredible until we consider that he and his wife were both well past the time of child bearing and Sarah had been barren all of her life. God does bless them with a son, and it is through this heir that the many magnificent promises of God are going to be fulfilled. However, **Genesis 22** tells us that God then came to Abraham and tells him that he needs to take his son up on the mountain and sacrifice him to God. To every single person in the history of ever...this would be an impossible thing to do since this was the one and only son of promise through which so many great things were to come. This defies all sorts of human logic and reasoning... and yet we see Abraham trusting in God and doing exactly as He commanded him to do.

I wanted to share these examples with you to simply make the Biblical case that true faith sometimes involves trusting in God when it simply doesn't make any sense to do so. We can see this principle at work in the lives of these people we have looked at up to this point, but I want for us to close by considering that we too must be these kind of people of faith. We must be willing to show genuine nature of our faith by being willing to trust in God's commands when they don't make sense.

II. True trusting faith is proven when we are willing to obey God even when we don't know the reason & it simply doesn't make sense to us.

A. It proves we acknowledge God's authority & right to command.

1. This is really the foundational point of all of this, and I want to tie it in with the subject of baptism that we addressed last week. We noted that there are a number of people who object to baptism for the forgiveness of sins because that would have to mean that we have the power to save ourselves. Let me again emphatically state that such an objection is not founded in Scripture, but it is founded in men's unwillingness to allow God to simply state His will and us simply be obedient to it.
2. God could have given us any sort of ritual to do in order for us to access the grace He offers through the sacrifice of Jesus. He very well could have commanded that we say a prayer and accept Jesus into our hearts. He could have, as I believe He has done, commanded us to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. He could have told us that we have to literally give up our lives in order to show our faith in Him. But thankfully, He has only commanded that we believe on His Son, repent of our sins, and be baptized in His name. This isn't some complicated process, but it is the process that God has commanded for us to undergo. If we want to enjoy the blessings of God then we must be willing to humble ourselves before Him acknowledging He has the right to command because He is God.
3. And this is true for any number of aspects in our faiths. Are we willing to submit to God's authority and right to command in the way that we operate as a church? Marriage? Morality? We must recognize that this point alone is sufficient to prove the necessity to trust in God's commands, but let's consider one more thing trusting in God confusing times proves.

B. It proves we acknowledge God's wisdom & knowledge over ours.

1. There have been theologians for centuries that have taken Biblical principles and teachings and twisted them into something that simply isn't compatible with what is actually seen in the Biblical text. But why would they do such a thing? I can't imagine that it is for any other reason than they simply believe that they know better than what has been persevered for us in the Bibles we all hold within our hands.
2. Again, take just about any Biblical subject that is taught in pretty clearly understandable terms, and you will probably find someone who denies those clear teachings in order to do whatever it is that they want to do. Baptism is certainly one of those subjects. Teachings on church organization, church discipline, and moral issues like sexual relations, alcohol use, and many more are neglected by many in order for their desires to be appeased. The people who do such things cannot accurately say they are trusting in God because they refuse to acknowledge that He has designed such teachings for our good. When we deny them, we only find ourselves in a world of hurt and trouble. Surely we must admit and acknowledge that God's ways, wisdom, and knowledge are truly higher than our own! **(Isaiah 55:8,9)**

At the end of the day, each of us have to sit down and examine our faiths and whether or not we can truly say that we believe and trust in God. It is one thing to believe and trust in God when whatever God has said makes complete sense within our own minds, but what about those times when things don't make sense? What about those times when God's Word simply tells us to do something without much explanation? What about those times when the command in no ways seems to bring about the desired result? What about those times when we simply think we know better? If we are truly striving for faithfulness towards God, then we must be willing to believe His commands and show our trust through obedience. May God help each of us to lay aside our own pride and perceived wisdom in order to acknowledge God as King and the supreme wisdom concerning what will help each of us to be pleasing to Him in everything that we do.