

The Object of Faith | Jesus Christ

Galatians 2:11-20

2.8.09

Read Galatians 2:16

The author of Hebrews, after discussing in chapter 10 how the just live by faith, in chapter 11 gives illustrations of great acts of faith.

- Illustrations help you put things into practice, like putting something together from Ikea, we can follow the pictures. Here, we are taught how to put into practice a righteous faith.
 - Abel was faith **worshiping**
 - Enoch was faith **walking**
 - Noah was faith **working**
 - Abraham was faith **willing**

- All of these are examples of what “faith is like”...
- But what all these characters had in common was who they had “faith in” ...

“Faith like” verses “Faith in”

- It's biblical and right to look at what “faith is like” but let us stop in the middle of the life of faith series and be reminded who our “faith is in”.
 - Not just who our “faith is in” at the beginning of our acts of faith, but who our faith must remain in to be found faithful...in the very end.
 - **THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH: FAITH IN JESUS**
 - We can't simply assume this.
 - I think it's good to be reminded...(through this vignette)

Galatians 2:11 - 13

- Peter showed up in Antioch (Paul's missionary base), and saw Jews and Gentiles enjoying Christian fellowship without regard to Jewish dietary laws.
 - Peter's vision in Acts 10
 - He ate regularly with Gentiles in Antioch

- BUT when Jews came from Jerusalem who were of “the circumcision,” Peter began to withdrawal and eat with them.
 - Why did Peter do this? ...Out of fear.
 - The Greek verb tense implies this was a gradual process.
- Slowly this led to other Jewish Christians doing this and eventually Barnabas...the son of encouragement!
 - Now there were two different tables. Jews & Gentile.

Galatians 2:14 - 15

Paul rebukes Peter's actions with two points...

- **His actions were undermining the Gospel**
 - Keep the Gospel Central!!!!
 - Peter's actions at the beginning of his visit reflected and enjoyed the Gospel of Jesus, however, it drifted from faith alone in Christ into Hypocrisy...
 - What Peter was doing was hypocrisy! Happily eating with the Gentiles at first then making them obey dietary laws when people from Jerusalem came...
- **His actions were falling back into religion**
 - Paul was reflecting (to the Gentiles) and reverting back to a **works based righteousness**.

A basic insight of Martin Luther's was:

'Religion' is the basic default mode of the human heart.

- Christians (you and me) who know the Gospel in principle and have been saved by it...continually revert to religion and works based righteousness.

We see that vividly here through PETER...

In all reality we can say that Peter, on arrival to Antioch, was living a life of faith. Remember Acts??...Peter was the one God used to welcome the Gentiles into the redeemed church

- Cf. Acts 10:9-15, 28, 34,
- Cf. Acts 11:17-18

- This took a great act of faith to trust God and go against hundreds of years of Jewish tradition and customs...*eating with Gentiles*. Then to defend what God had done in front of your peers.
 - This was an Act of Faith
- Then to stroll up to Antioch and eat with Gentile believers, ignoring the dietary laws.

Luther said that even after you are converted by the gospel your heart would go back to operating on the religious principle unless you deliberately, repeatedly set it to gospel-mode.

- By the grace of God, Paul is used to set Peter's heart to "Gospel-mode"

Galatians 2:16

- Not made right by "works of the law" = ***any human effort to be right before God***
- **3 times Paul says we are "made right" and "stay right" before God by FAITH IN JESUS.**
 - "Faith" & "Believed" from same word family in Greek.
 - Purposefully redundant.
 - Because FAITH IN JESUS is the antithesis of HUMAN EFFORT.

This verse is Paul setting Peter's heart to Gospel-mode.

Peter was not "in-step" with the truth of the Gospel.

- We all understand this about saving faith but what about remaining faith?
 - The Gospel is not something you believe at conversion then move on from.
 - "I believed that I'm saved by grace through faith but now I have to do things for God."

- That's not the Gospel & that's not faith...

What Faith Is Not

[Acts of Faith set in contrast to believing the Gospel]

1. Faith is not an attempt in earning the favor of God
"I step out in faith in order to get things from God."
 - This is an aspect of the default mode of the human heart... religion.
 - NO ONE WOULD ADMIT THIS.
- This attitude is put to the test when, once you step out in faith, things & circumstances go wrong.

When circumstances go wrong we either blame God or blame self.

Blame God.

- "I gave it all up for You and THIS happens..."
 - What we're really saying is, "You owe me."

Blame self.

- "I must not be praying enough or reading enough"

Ex. Moving to Carp.

When our acts of faith are "In Christ" and centered on the Gospel then when circumstances go wrong in my life, I struggle but I know that all the wrath of God and my punishment for sin fell on Jesus. I know God allows these things to happen in my life for my character, my perseverance, my training, my discipline and so I can comfort and minister to others...BUT I know He will exercise His Fatherly love within my trials.

God's love for you is perfect.

- He does not love you any more according to merit or obedience.
 - God doesn't love me more today as a pastor than He did when I was a born-again drug-abusing teenager.
 - Through my obedience, the only thing that has changed is my understanding of His love.

THEREFORE: Our acts of faith are not to gain God's favor but are rather done to delight and enjoy Him.

2. Faith is not copying someone else's example of faith

- This is called discipleship, and it's a good thing.
- We're all inspired by someone's act of faith and encouraged by examples of faith. But simply doing what they did is not an act of faith...
 - Illustration: San Francisco, faith like Noah.

There was no one:

- Holding his hand
- Cheering him on
- Holding him accountable
- Showing him how
- Praying for him
- Helping him
- Leading him
- Following him
- In fact, they probably mocked him
- Kept on task for 120 years! **That is a life of faith** (I want that life!)

If my faith is not IN JESUS, it won't last 120 years let alone 120 days.

- I want to be like Noah & like Abraham...but they were different men with different callings. Noah was called to stay and build with his own hands. Abraham was called to leave and God would build him a great nation.
 - **What did they have in common...FAITH IN GOD.**

Hebrews 6:12 says *do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

- **Imitate what?** Their faith IN God.

Our Faith is to be centered on our Glorious Savior Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

- Notice first Paul talks about death.
 - To live a life of faith in Jesus Christ alone we have to die. Why? Because even our acts of faith can become self-righteous and self-centered.
 - Paul says that the self-righteous and self-centered Paul has died...and in his place, Christ lives.

- What does a life look like that has Christ residing, Christ living, a life united with Christ?
 - *...the life I now live...I live by faith in the Son of God.*
 - I trust in Jesus. He is the object of my ongoing life of faith. His word I believe. His glory I seek. To His promises I cling. He is my treasure, my goal and my motivation. I live by faith in the Son of God.

- Paul doesn't stop there, he says why...
 - *...who loved me and gave Himself for me.*
 - Why does Paul live a life of faith "in Jesus"?
 - **Because of the Gospel.**

Our acts of faith are to be motivated by His great love for us, who because we were so bad, had to die but because He loved us so much was glad to die.

The Christian gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued and that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and sniveling. I cannot feel superior to anyone, and yet I have nothing to prove to anyone. I do not think more of myself nor less of myself. Instead, I think of myself less¹. -Tim Keller

Why? Because Jesus is the center and object of faith, not performance not productivity not progress...basically not you.

So when we keep our eyes on the Gospel of Jesus we become neither proud nor fearful.

¹ Tim Keller, *The Reason for God* 181

- For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
Romans 8:18
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
Philippians 4:13
- And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
Romans 8:28
- But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. Acts 20:24

Author of Hebrews puts it this way in 12:2 **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God**

Look unto Jesus: the object of our faith

*The Author & Finisher of our FAITH: Literally the Founder and Perfecter
Joy set before Him endured the cross: THE GOSPEL, Jesus endured the wrath of God and suffered for our sin foreseeing the joy of bringing us to God.*

You were so bad He HAD to die.

You were so loved He was GLAD to die.

HE is the object of our faith. Let's worship Him.