

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, January 09, 2011
Foundations for Faith

Last week we started the New Year off with how to achieve your goals for 2011. The message focused on two things. The first was implied more than spoken about and that's that we need goals to achieve them. Someone once said, "If you aim at nothing you'll hit it every time." The second was our need for faith. We have to believe that we're going to achieve what we set out to do or it's not going to happen. In 1 John 5:4 we are told that faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Without faith we can't please God and to the one who has it nothing is impossible. Faith moves mountains. I called it the currency of Heaven. The problem I see is that many make a decision to receive Christ as Savior and Lord but then don't grow properly in their faith because they lack the follow through that God intended to be part of their experience. They have a tendency to lean upon feelings and emotions to determine what they do and don't do. While they are genuinely born again, the lack of spiritual nurturing and maturity can make them anemic in their faith.

This morning I want to speak about the foundations for faith. What undergirds it? What is it built upon? It's important that we understand this. We can understand the need for faith, but then look to the "feeling of faith" to bring us through. While John tells us in the verse above that it is our victory, we must understand that faith is not something that exists in a vacuum. It is the eye that sees God to be who he is; that he means what he says and says what he means. I heard it put like this: the eye was created to see, but it can't look at itself. That is, you can't take your eye to look at your eye. (Now looking in a mirror is cheating!) The eye is what sees the objects it beholds. Faith is seeing God. It is believing in him and trusting him. In Romans 10:17 we are told that faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of Christ. When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water he didn't just get out of the boat and start walking too. Matthew 14:28 "*Lord, if it's you,*" Peter replied, "*tell me to come to you on the water.*" (NIV) Jesus told him to come and so he did. Faith is a positive response to God's word.

In the Gospel of John and chapter one we are told: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Jesus is the living manifestation of the Word of God. He told the people that the Scripture testified concerning him. The Apostle Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.* (NIV) But how can you correctly handle the word of truth if you don't know it? Receiving Christ first is essential, but then comes the follow through of growing in grace and knowledge of him. We learn more about him through prayer, study, and faithful obedient living etc. When you read your Bible, Jesus, the living word will quicken your heart to resonate with the one who lives in you. Jesus had to learn the Scripture as well. He was taught by his parents and grew in wisdom and stature. It was not automatic. He had to participate with Father in the same way that we do. He had to live a life of faith to please the Father and he demonstrated the way for us. John 5:30 *By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.* John 15:10-12 *If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*

You will never have ears to hear what the Lord is saying to you if you don't know his word. In Acts chapter 8 Phillip asked the Ethiopian eunuch if he understood what he was reading. His reply was, "How can I unless someone explains it to me?" That's one of the reasons we gather corporately. We are not in this alone. We are starting a new series of classes to help you learn these things in February on Monday nights. Make it a priority to learn what God is telling us through his word. Your faith will grow. Your confidence will grow. And you will learn to hear the voice of God in a new and fresh way. God has great plans for us and is looking for our heartfelt participation in his divine nature. It is not mystical guesswork. It is knowing and understanding his word, his heart, his plans for us, and a deepening of our relationship with him and one another.