

FAITH IS VITAL TO CHURCH GROWTH

I.Elements of faith.

- A. There are a lot of false beliefs in the world about faith.
 - 1. A teacher asked her Bible class what faith is. One boy said he knew and when asked, answered: "it is when you are required to believe a lie".
 - 2. Kierkegaard, the philosopher, wrote that religious faith is a blind leap in the dark.
 - 3. Huxley, the atheist, wrote, "Theology claims that the just shall live by faith: science says the just shall live by verification".
- B. There is so much misunderstanding and false teaching about faith, it is no wonder so many have lost their faith.
- C. We must be like Paul if we want the church to grow and say, "I know in Whom I have believed."
- D. It is great faith that will move the church forward.
- E. What is faith?
 - 1. The Greek word pistis means "firm persuasion; a conviction based upon hearing; trust".
 - 2. God defines it as...(Hebrews 11:1).
- F. There are three elements that compose real, biblical faith.
 - 1. The first is knowledge (Romans 10:17).
 - a. We hear that faith ends where knowledge begins, but faith cannot begin where there is no knowledge.
 - b. Eternal life comes in part from knowing God (John 17:3).
 - c. Faith never stands alone without truthful information.
 - d. It is not mere intuition and blind hope that something is true or real.
 - e. A person who has no knowledge will never be able to do things of which he is ignorant.
 - f. Israel was destroyed for a lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6), which manifested itself in a lack of faith.
 - 2. The second is mental assent.
 - a. This means the believer accepts and agrees with the evidence or information presented to him.
 - b. Facts are no good if one will not believe them.
 - c. This was the problem with the Gentiles, which resulted in God giving them up (Romans 1:18-22).
 - d. Because they rejected knowledge, God rejected them.
 - e. Without mental assent, you have unbelief.
 - f. When it comes to church growth, we've all heard sermons about it and verses that teach it, but have we really given mental assent to it?
 - 3. The third is action.
 - a. James 2 teaches us that faith without action is dead.
 - b. Jesus had to deal with this while He was on the earth (John 12:42-43).
 - c. Faith is something that can be seen because of actions.
 - d. Outward actions are the result of inward convictions based on knowledge and mental assent.

G.The Bible has always placed a great emphasis on being a doer of God's word and not just a hearer.

1.Deuteronomy 30:15-20).

2.Acts 1:1.

3.Philipians 4:9.

4.Matthew 7:21-23.

H.If we are lacking in knowledge, mental assent, or action, faith is not present in our work.

I.We all need to grow in faith in every area, even in the area of church growth.

J.A congregation, or an individual, will never be greater than its faith.

II.Object of faith.

A.The faith that moves an individual or a congregation forward, is one that centers on God and His word.

B.One writer put it this way: "It is believing in, not merely believing that".

1.It is a complete and total trust in God and in His power to bring about that which He has commanded, allowing ourselves to be used by Him to accomplish it.

2.Real faith goes deeper than just accepting facts; it is completely trusting the One behind the facts.

3.Our faith is not methods but in God.

a.The God we must know if we hope to have eternal life (John 17:3);

b.The God we must think right about if we hope to do right (Acts 17:28-31).

4.We have to remember that when we've truly done all we can, God will make up any difference if we have faith in Him and His ability.

C.All our plans will come to nothing if we leave faith out of the equation.

1.1 Corinthians 2:4-5.

2.We can't forget what Ephesians 3:20 tells us about God.

D.We must have faith in God but also faith in His word.

1.We must believe that it is the inspired word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

2.It is in this book that we find God's plan for our lives.

3.If I don't believe in it as I should, I won't let it guide me as it must.

4.It is in this great book that we see the promises of God to those who live by faith:

a.Philippians 4:13.

b.Romans 8:37.

c.Philippians 1:6.

d.1 Peter 1:5.

e.Matthew 19:26.

f.Hebrews 13:5.

E.A congregation that does not have a solid faith in God's word will not stand long.

F.We have to be students of God's word or we won't have the faith necessary to do God's will.

III.Improper faith.

A.The Bible is clear in its teaching that all faith is not acceptable to God.

1. Matthew 6:30.
 2. 1 Timothy 1:19-20.
 3. Romans 14:1.
 4. James 2:14-17 - a dead faith.
 5. 1 Thessalonians 3:10 - some were lacking in faith.
- B. We must study God's word in order to have the proper faith.
- C. Once we study and ask God's blessings on our efforts, we must put our faith into action.
1. Every child of God, in every age, that pleased God, was one who acted for God.
 2. Their faith moved them to do whatever was necessary to please God at that moment.
- D. It is by faith that we will work in God's service (2 Thessalonians 1:3).
- E. It is by faith that we will be able to overcome the world (1 John 5:4).

From a book entitled "How To Have Biblical Church Growth" by J.J. Turner