

The Spirit Of Faith

Introduction. In 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10, Paul expresses what man's outlook and attitude toward life ought to be. Surely Paul was moved, not only by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the will of God as he wrote these words, but also by the faith of his own heart in God's will and in the provisions of God's grace.

Paul had the right evaluation of the things of this life in mind. He was thinking of the immortal nature of man. Man's spirit is made in the image of God and only by the proper appreciation of that eternal spirit can we recognize the need for its salvation through faith in God.

Paul said that we had received the "same spirit of faith" and it is the spirit of faith that brings about this whole discussion. In view of death's certainty, in view of the resurrection of the dead, and in view of the fact that we are accountable to God, Paul urges that we need to have in our hearts the same spirit of faith. Let's see what is the "spirit of faith".

I. ***"I Believed, And Therefore Have I Spoken"***

- A. Based upon the statement of Paul, my faith can only rest upon the word of God. Faith is what brings us into a proper relationship with God (Romans 10:17). This shows that faith is essential to pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus taught that if a man does not believe the gospel, he will be lost eternally (John 1:12-13; 8:24; Mark 16:15-16). There is plenty of ground upon which to believe and to trust the promises of God's word (Joshua 21:45; 23:14; 1 Kings 8:56).
- B. But a great many people who readily agree that faith is essential and faith is important will deny the essentiality and importance of it by saying that it does not matter what a person believes, just so he is sincere. But this means that truth cannot be determined. This then means that it does not matter what we believe. This is equivalent to saying that it does not matter what God says. So you throw your Bible on the junk pile and forget it, or go your own way and do as you please.

II. ***"The Love Of The Truth"***

- A. In 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, Paul referred to those who did not have a love of the truth. They do not put in their hearts the proper emphasis and value on the truth. They do not recognize that it is like a treasure hidden in the field and like a pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-45). If we do not have a love of the truth, we will be sent a working of error that we would believe a lie (1 Kings 13:9, 18, 21-22). Although God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:32; 33:11), a

person must believe the truth in order to be saved. To believe error condemns. To believe the truth saves.

- B. There is just one standard by which truth can be determined. The measuring reed for your faith and mine is the word of God (John 17:17). There must be a standard for everything. If I were to ask what time it was, I would probably receive a number of different answers. But if we absolutely wanted to know what time it was, we would contact the Naval Observatory which measures atomic time for the entire country. You would not argue with that, would you? This ought to be our attitude in matters of faith. I must be regulated by the standard which has been definitively determined in the Bible.
- C. There is an example in the life of our Lord which illustrates this point:
1. In Matthew 16:13, Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi and asked, "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" The disciples answered, "Men say ..." They represent human doctrine, creeds, standards, ideas, opinions, arrangements, and institutions. What one of them says is just as good as what the other says. All of these are constantly changing and being revised. You can go to the library and trace the evolution of amendments and revisions to men's creeds. Put your faith in one today, and it may teach the exact opposite tomorrow.
 2. But the word of God is not subject to revisions (1 Peter 1:24; John 12:48; Matthew 16:19; Romans 2:16). Suppose a human creed tells you that it is all right to do a certain action to please God. Just imagine any human practice (sprinkling and pouring for baptism, instrumental music, or support for the social gospel and human institutions). The creed says, "You do it and you will please God." But in the judgment, God rejects the practice because it is not in His word. What can you do about it then? What will determine your salvation: men's doctrines or God's word?
 3. Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is what the word of God taught. Here is the dividing line between truth and error. The same line of division is drawn today. The Jews covered up the truth of God with their commandments and traditions in Matthew 15:8-9. Jesus did not teach human traditions and He did not teach His disciples to observe them. He rejected them, and He did not bind them upon His disciples. Where do you draw the line? You draw the line between that which God authorizes, which the word of God teaches and that which man has invented and of which man is the author (Matthew 15:13).
- D. The issue is to honor God's word and to know what is the spirit of faith. Will you let it settle every issue? Will you let it resolve every question? Will you prescribe your faith strictly by what it says? It is

one think to talk about faith and another thing to exercise it. Paul says, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." What are the limitations? Again, Paul says, "According as it is written."

III. ***"Not Go Beyond The Things That Are Written"***

- A. Not only do I believe what is written, but I must speak according to what is written. This is the spirit of faith. Unless I have this attitude toward the word of God, I do not need to profess faith, because I do not have it. My faith is sufficient only when I let the word of God become the focal point of all that I believe and do.
- B. I do not have the right to sign the name of the Lord to anything unless the word of the Lord teaches it. I am committing spiritual forgery when I do. I am showing my disrespect for the will of the Lord and the word of the Lord when I do. Paul made the above statement in 1 Corinthians 4:6 and I do not care who the preacher is or how many degrees or qualifications he has after his name. There is not any man who has the right to preach any other gospel than what is revealed (Matthew 7:21; 1 Peter 4:11).
- C. Have you ever stopped to think about what a tragedy it would be if a man had to admit that there was, or that there might be, just one error in the word of God? How would you find what was wrong? Who is wise enough to sit in judgment on the word of God? And yet, men go through the Bible and tell us not to believe things or take them at face value: God's creation in six days, Jonah and the big fish, Noah and the worldwide flood, the virgin birth of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, etc. How did they find out?
- D. If the Bible can be wrong about any of these things, it can be wrong about all of them. It will show that it is not reliable about any of them. How are you going to find out what the Bible is wrong about if there is a single mistake in it? I must either accept all of it or none of it.

IV. ***"All Scripture Is Inspired By God"***

- A. Paul made this statement in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Where can I learn what good works are in the sight of God? Not by the wisdom, doctrines, or creeds of men. I only learn by that which God has spoken. So the word of God is sufficient and it is what has revealed the righteousness of God (Romans 1:16-17). My faith in the righteousness of God has to be grounded upon and rooted in the gospel. If I do not believe what is in the gospel, and that only, I cannot believe only in God's righteousness.
- B. I must also believe in the authority of the scriptures. If Christ has not authorized a thing, it does not belong in the gospel, it does not belong in the church, and you cannot practice it by faith. So I need to

recognize that I can respect divine authority only to the extent that my faith is satisfied with the word of God. Now you can call that legalism or Pharisaical if you want. But Paul calls it the spirit of faith. It is reverence for the word of God.

- C. I must believe that the Bible is God's final word. He is not going to give an additional revelation. The Bible affirms the finality of the gospel just like it affirms the finality of the sacrifice of the Son of God (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 9). There was a time when God spoke through the prophets, but He has spoken to us once for all through His Son (Hebrews 1:1; Jude 3). You cannot have faith in God's righteousness and you cannot have Jesus Christ unless you are willing to abide in the doctrine of Christ.

Conclusion. Where is your faith? What do you believe and why do you believe? What is the spirit of faith? It is to believe and speak according to that which is written. When a person differs from what the Bible teaches, that person is wrong and the Bible is right (Romans 3:4).

Our plea is that you put your faith in the word of God and let every question and issue be answered by it. Every problem in life can be solved by its prescription. The result of faith and the end of faith is salvation. But that faith has to be expressed in obedience. The faith that will not obey cannot save. The divine commandments which explain salvation are ultimatums. If you have not met these ultimatums, you have not been born again, you are not a citizen of the kingdom, and you are not a Christian. But you can be if you have faith enough to do what the Lord requires.