

What is Faith – Philippines

I) Introduction

- 1) **S2** - In December 1944, as World War II seemed to be turning in favor of the Allies, Germany launched one final massive surprise attack in Belgium known as the Battle of the Bulge.
- 2) Caught in the path of the attack was the small Belgian town of Bastogne which stood in the way of the German army's move westward
 - a) If Bastogne fell quickly, the German advance could split Allied forces and possibly change the course of the war
- 3) 15,000 American forces defended the town, but were vastly outnumbered and completely surrounded by German forces
 - a) German artillery hammered the town day and night
 - b) Medical tents overflowed with wounded men and medics worked for days without sleep
 - c) Ammunition, food, and medicine ran dangerously low
 - d) Many soldiers suffered frostbite, starvation, and extreme exhaustion. Thousands had been killed or wounded; but they refused to surrender; despite their suffering, they held the city
- 4) Eventually General George Patton's forces broke the siege and relieved the suffering soldiers

B.) How did they hold the line? How did they find the courage, the steadfastness to resist the urge to surrender?

- 1) Many soldiers cited faith in God; they prayed for courage, survival and for their friends' safety; they said prayer gave them calm in situations where death felt unavoidable.

- 2) Chaplains moved constantly among the foxholes and aid stations, praying with wounded soldiers, holding brief services, and helping bury the dead under shellfire

II) A study of Faith

- A.) Like the soldiers of Bastogne, the original readers of Hebrews were weary soldiers; they were Christians facing persecution, social rejection, loss of property, and fear

Hebrews 10:32-34a - *Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴ You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property...*

- 1) And they seemed to be going backwards in the knowledge of the Word

Hebrews 2:1 - *We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away*

Hebrews 5:11-12a - *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. ¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again.*

- 2) Some were tempted to turn back from following Christ because the cost seemed too great
- 3) So Hebrews 11 was written to steady Christians whose faith may be wavering in the midst of suffering
- 4) In verses 11:4-39, the author provides a list of people in the Bible, such as David, Noah and Gideon, who achieved great things, not because they were especially talented, but because they had faith in God's promises despite major challenges (*sa kabila ng malalaking hamon*)

5) The writer's message is clear: you are not the first people to suffer while following God; others have walked this road before you, and God was faithful to them.

B.) We as Christians should follow in their footsteps as people of true faith (*tunay na pananampalataya*). What is true faith? (*Ano ang tunay na pananampalataya?*)

a) Paul answers this in Hebrews 11:1 - **READ S3** – What does this mean?; do you turn your brain off? Follow blindly? Believe in myths?

C.) Let's do a word study on verse one to gain a deeper understanding of what faith should mean for a Christian

1) **3a** - **Faith** – *pistis* – conviction of the truth of anything, belief with the predominant idea of trust (or confidence)

a) You are firmly convinced that something is true, so much so that you stake your life, your possessions and your future on it.

2) **3b** - **Substance** – *hypostasis (hoopawstusis)* – foundation, substructure, firmness, assurance

a) We get the sense here that faith is not a concept or theory, but a real thing that is the foundation of real things

3) **3c** - **Evidence** – *elegchos* – proof, conviction, that by which a thing is proven or tested

4) Here's what these words together mean

a) Faith isn't blind belief or wishful thinking; it is a divine gift of supernatural sight and knowledge

b) The ability to see beyond the natural order, beyond what the physical senses can experience; this sight perceives spiritual evidence of supernatural truth

D.) S4 - Here's a good way to look at it; each of our five senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell – provide sensory evidence of physical realities

1) You're walking down a street and smell fresh bread...that's evidence there is a bakery nearby

a) You're confident, you're assured of the bakery's presence, because your senses perceive it

2) 4a - When investigators (*mga imbestigador o pulis*) try to solve a crime, they don't simply go by feeling or pick random people out of a crowd and say, "you did it!"

a) No, the law requires a very high degree of certainty of the facts - Who did it? How was it done? and Why?

b) The investigator must present a case that has substance; what is that substance? Evidence!

c) Evidence is facts (*mga katotohanan*) that will convince a judge and jury that the investigator's case – his claim – is true and can be trusted as the foundation for a valid legal decision.

d) How does the investigator acquire that evidence?

e) By using his physical senses and thinking capacity (*kakayahang mag-isip*) to study crime scenes and interview witnesses and suspects

3) 4b - Another example is medical research

a) Employing their physical senses and thinking capacity, scientists use lab experiments to gather evidence that undergirds vital medical decisions

b) When people take medicine or undergo surgery we do it by faith; we trust the doctor's actions are based on research that is trusted

E.) Now Christians exercise similar rationality when approaching their beliefs...we have the truth claims of Scripture, which we can investigate with our human reasoning skills

- 1) However, we must look at Faith as another fact-gathering sense; it's like a set of eyes that see realities beyond the limitations of time, space and matter.
- 2) God, in His mercy, unlocks the human mind by His Spirit so we can see the supernatural reality in the evidence – we can grasp things that the natural man cannot see or understand
- 3) Much of the world, even when presented with vast amounts of historical, biological, and philosophical evidence for God's work, will still reject it; they can't see it with the eyes of faith
- 4) Faith is sight that acquires evidence of God's activity in Creation, the church and in our lives; the evidence is so substantial, we can trust the Lord with all we have and all we are

S5 - 1 Corinthians 2:14 – *Now the natural man doesn't receive the things of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to him; and he can't know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

- 5) We, however, as believers, perceive God's presence and work because faith gives us that ability:

5a - In Hebrews 11:3, we read, *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible”*

- 6) Additionally:

- a) By faith, we know God is; by faith, we know Christ is His eternal Son
- b) By faith, we know God's word is truth; by faith, we know God provides

- c) By faith, we know God is faithful and never fails His people
- d) By faith, we know God's work and see it in our lives and in the world
- e) By faith, we know we are saved by God's grace and the shed blood of Jesus
- f) By faith, we trust God more and more because we see the evidence that He keeps his promises

F.) Now, let's jump to Hebrews 11:6 – S6

- 1) Here folks, we are presented with a huge chunk of truth; a profound statement of essential Christian doctrine
- 2) If you don't have faith – if you don't have the divinely gifted ability to believe God and to act in trust on that faith – it is impossible to please Him
- 3) The writer is not speaking of a faith that involves empty religious practice, but rather faith that leads to obedience, even when it's difficult (suffering)
- 4) He is speaking of a faith that sees enough to make us hungry for God, so hungry that we seek after Him diligently...not lazily...we sincerely want to grow

III) The examples

A.) Our ancient forefathers left us a legacy of this kind of faith...they accomplished great things and were victorious in suffering because they had substantive faith; they are our examples.

Hebrews 11:7-12 – *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.*

⁸ *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.* ⁹ *By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a*

foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.

¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

- 2) **S7** - Both Noah and Abraham did hard things that made no human sense: Noah built an ark in preparation for rain that had never fallen before
- 3) Abraham left his homeland and ventured into the unknown on the word of a God previously unknown to him
- 4) Both act on faith...that the Word of the God they encountered would prove true; they could see what lay far ahead with supernatural eyes

C.) Consider the story of Gideon in Judges 6:11-16 (**Group read in T Bible**)

- 2) God called Gideon to rescue the Israelites from the heavy oppression of neighboring foreign raiders the Midianites, like land pirates, *mga pirata*
- 3) Gideon was no superman; in fact, he was a scared farmer; he heard from God while he was hiding from the Midianites...here's the funny thing, God calls him valiant warrior (*magiting na mandirigma*)
- 4) You see, that's how God's grace works; our Lord sees what He intends to form in us long before we see it ourselves.
 - a) Don't act on what you think you are, act on God's call, which exceeds what you are
- 5) When Gideon steps up, God takes the man's faith one huge step further; he tells him to reduce his army from 32,000 men to only three hundred

6) Here's what they're going up against: From Judges 7:12, *The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.*

a) But God asks what is seemingly nonsensical so he can strip Gideon of self-reliance so the victory would clearly belong to the Lord

b) Sure enough, Gideon's small force routed the enormous enemy army

c) Here's the lesson we take from this: faith means trusting God even when He asks us to do things that make no earthly sense.

7) Also, this reminds us that God uses flawed people, sometimes mightily

a) In fact, some of the greatest men, Abraham, David and even Peter were guilty of betrayal, lack of trust and in David's case, heinous sin.

b) Faith heroes are often imperfect, fearful, and inconsistent. Yet they moved forward in obedience anyway; God honored their trust despite their weakness.

c) You all have gifts (they are what God gives you); you don't earn them, God gives them to you.

S8 - [1 Corinthians 12:7-9, 27](#) - *A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸ To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. ⁹ The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing... ²⁷ All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.*

III) Using the Gifts

A.) If you have faith; you believe that God is, that Jesus is His Son, and He is your Savior, and you want to follow Jesus, then the Holy Spirit will give you spiritual gifts

B.) He will give you the passion and the power to teach, or encourage, or help, or give or prophecy, or even see people healed

C.) True faith leads you to believe that God is equipping you for His service. He wants you to be like Noah, Abraham, Gideon, and women like Dorcas, Deborah and many others

1) Join hands with your pastor and say pastor, I want to learn my gifts and grow in them to do God's work

2) I know He can do more in me and through me than I could ever imagine!

D.) **Summary**

1) Faith is a supernatural gift from God that allows us to see beyond our five senses into God's reality

2) Without faith, we are blind to God's truth and can never please Him

3) Those who have faith, see that God can be trusted in all things because we see the evidence of his faithfulness in His Word and in our lives

4) God can and will do marvelous things through us if we are willing to walk in our gifts and serve Him