

PBC20070715AM2

Faith Matters

I Corinthian 13

July 15, 2007- Sunday, 11:00 AM - Dr. David H. McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, Faith Matters]

[applause] Well, the question has been offered: Do you know Jesus and does He live in your heart? Do you believe that He is the Son of God who came to this world to be the Savior for all mankind?

You know this student group made a trip and the trip was about many different things. Obviously music was a part of the trip and they've done a great job musically today, ah... encouraging us, blessing us with their voices, their talents, their songs. Obviously a trip... it's a whole lot about movement. Some of you are absolutely shocked by what you've seen this morning. And if you could have seen... seen the pop show last night before the Gospel section, you'd really been shocked! But ah... that movement had very little to do with where you are, sitting in church this morning. It had everything to do with the places that they went and when they stood in Balboa Park and when they stood on Mission Beach and when they went to Tijuana and when they were there on the streets of California Venture at the Disney theme park there, crowds would gather because they wanted to see and to hear what is it that these students are here to do.

So it was about music, it was about movement, it certainly was about ministry. A lot of ministry going on with people in need. But the greatest thing that this whole tour has been about has been about a message, and that message is a message that changes people's lives. It's a message that's changed the life of these students. Maybe you saw earlier in that video where the young lady had an iPod and there was a gentleman listening. And as he was sitting there listening suddenly his hand went up because there in his own language he heard the message of the Gospel and it said, "If you receive Christ into your heart today, would you lift your hand?" And right there in that moment the miracle is witnessed as a man's life is changed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And that message is the message that we share with you today. In fact, it is a message of faith, of hope and of love. I really believe that the entire Christian life can be reduced to those three simple words: faith, hope and love. Now when I say the Christian life, I'm not talking about all the things that Christians believe... the things that we teach. If I were going to describe the Christian faith, I would do it in different words. We all know that the Christian faith is founded around the Person of Jesus Christ; His death, His burial and His resurrection. But if we're talking about the Christian life, we're talking about faith, we're talking about hope and we're talking about love.

At the end of 1 Corinthians chapter 13, the thirteenth verse, the Apostle Paul is writing about the Christian life and this is what he says. He says:

13) And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

But you'll notice there that the very first word that Paul presents is the word *faith*, because faith is where it all begins. That's why this song says, "Do you know Jesus?" and then "Do you believe that He came, that He died, that your sins can be forgiven?" because the way that we begin the Christian life is by faith. And I am absolutely convinced that Satan loves nothing more than to confuse people about what faith is all about. Especially at the point of salvation. What is faith all about?

Now if you were to ask people about faith, you'd get a variety of different definitions. Some people would say to you that faith is a feeling... faith is feeling. Some people say, "I like to go to church because it builds up my faith." What they mean is that they get a feeling when they have the feeling of faith. It's sort of like courage. It's sort of like fear. And many people want to experience a faith feeling in their life.

Some people come to church with hopes of getting spiritual goosebumps, and they think if they get enough goosebumps then they've got their faith all pumped up. The only problem is as soon as they get back into the work... into the world, suddenly their faith is doused and the feelings go away and they think, "Oh, I've lost my faith."

You see you can't base your faith on your emotions. Emotions are to the spiritual life what desserts are to the physical life. Anybody here like dessert? I love dessert. And it's tasty and it's delicious and it's enjoyable. But you know the problem with dessert is that there's no substance in it. And when you finish eating it, it goes away very quickly. And so in much the same way many people see faith as only a feeling.

Other people say, no, faith is like a formula; it's a formula. That is, you learn the 10 basic steps or the 5 basic ah... concepts and they simply try to apply faith like a formula in life. And they think if they can just keep living out the formula that they're somehow going to live a life of faith.

Now, no doubt about it, our faith leads us to understand, to believe, and to practice certain spiritual principles. The Christian life is a principled life. We live it based on the precepts of God's Word, the principles that are found here, and the promises of God. But faith is not a feeling and faith is not a formula.

For other people they believe that faith is fantasy... it's a fantasy, it's just believing! Make believe! Believe in something, believe in anything. And if you believe and if you believe enough, then you have faith. But the Bible teaches very clearly that all that believes is not faith. Because unless your faith is rooted and built on the substance and the evidence of the Word of God and the reality of truth, then there is no foundation for

faith. Sincerity cannot replace faith. Hard work cannot replace faith. Nothing can take the place of faith, because faith is not a feeling, faith is not a formula and faith is not a fantasy. What is faith? Listen to what the Bible says... Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1. The Scripture says:

11) Now faith is the (what? Say the word with me) Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen... It is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.

When I think about what faith is I would have to describe it this way, Faith is commitment that is based on the substance of God's character and it is action that is based on the evidence of God's Word. It is commitment based on the substance of God's character; it is action based on the evidence of God's Word. When we tell you to believe in Jesus, we're not just saying work up a feeling. We're not just saying [clap] follow the footsteps. We're not just saying you need to believe to believe. We're saying there is truth about who Christ is and what He came to do. And faith is what matters. Faith is how you begin. Faith is the way that you can know that you're going to heaven.

Did you know that the Christian life is about what you know? Not just believing in the sense that "I wish" or "I hope" but about what you know. And therefore, the Bible tells us that faith... real faith matters. Why does faith matter? Let me suggest several reasons to you that faith matters this morning.

One reason that faith matters is because grace demands it... grace demands it. If salvation as we have said is all about God's grace and what He has done for us in the person of Jesus Christ, being received by faith, then grace demands that it has to be by faith and by faith alone that anyone is ever saved.

In the fourth chapter of the book of Romans there's a description of a man of faith. His name is Abraham. And when you read about the life of Abraham, you read about the life of a man who believed God, and that belief... not what he did, but what he believed was counted to him, the Bible says, for righteousness. He was made right with God by faith. And so the Bible tells us there in Romans chapter 4, and down in verse 5 [verse 4]... let's look at this together:

4) Now to one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5) To the one who does not work, but trusts in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted to him as righteousness.

If you work for something and you receive it, that's not faith! You're just getting what you're due.

I see my friend Don McBride sitting here on the front row. (Don't worry, I'm not calling you up here. I'm just going to talk about you, okay?) Don, now let's say that this morning right here, right now we agree that you have some work you need to have done around your house this week. Okay? The

yard needs some work, your house needs some painting, you need all those things. And you and I agree that I will come work for you and you establish an amount and I agree with you that I'll work for you at so much an hour, so many hours this week. Okay? We make that agreement. And so tomorrow morning, 7:00am I show up at the McBride's house. I'm there all day long. I work, I do everything that I can in the course of the day. I work for 8-10 hours... maybe I work to sunset tomorrow evening and do the same thing on Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday. And let's say that on Friday afternoon I knock off at about 5:00. Finally got all the work done and there's Don McBride. We made this agreement here in church this morning, but there's Don McBride and he shows up, and guess what? Don's standing there with a great big... package and it's all wrapped up and there's a big bow around that package and he hands me that package and he says, "I'm such a good, gracious man, here's what I'm going to give you." And I open that package and inside that package there's a... there's a paycheck. I look at Don McBride and I say, "Don, this isn't a gift. You've just given me what I deserve! I worked for this money, right? I worked to get this check." And Don isn't a gracious man because he gave me a paycheck wrapped up in a gift box if I did the work!

But on the other hand let's say that Don McBride and I don't have any deal like that and I don't even think about Don McBride much this week. But all the sudden when Friday rolls around, Don McBride shows up and when he shows up he comes to my office and he says, "You know what? I just want you to know that I love you and I care about you." And he gives me a great big gift box, and I open that box and inside that box there's a check... a big check... a generous check, and I'm saying Don is a very gracious man, right? Because Don was thinking about me when I wasn't thinking about Don! Don was caring about my needs when I wasn't thinking about that, because he was a very gracious man. (And if you are gracious like that, we can meet right after the service and take care of business. [laughter] Okay? I just wanted you to know.) But you see, it's all about grace. Grace demands, grace demands that it is by faith and faith alone.

That's why the Bible tells us in the book of John chapter 3 and verse 18... You know John 3:16?

16) For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life.

God did something for us when we didn't deserve it. But listen to this:

18) Whoever believes in Him (that is in Jesus) is not condemned. But whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

You see, there is no other way but the way of faith. And faith alone is what makes salvation possible. It is by grace and it is through faith. Listen to Ephesians 2:8 and 9:

8) *For by grace you are saved, through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9) not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

The message that we share is a message of grace! It is a message that can only be received by faith. And therefore, it is all of grace [clap] so that it can only [clap] be by faith.

I ask you today do you know Jesus? Have you believed on His name? Is faith real in your life? Grace demands that you come to the place that you realize that even if you tried... even if you worked... even if you wanted to earn salvation, you couldn't do it because it's all based on what God did when He put His Son Jesus to death on a cross, when He was buried and when He rose again.

There's something else that I want you to see about faith this morning, and that is that faith matters, not only because grace demands it for salvation, but life requires it. Life requires faith!

How many of you would agree with me this morning that life doesn't always turn out the way you plan it or thought that it would? Anybody? Okay. Life has got some unpredictable moments, doesn't it? Life has some out of control experiences, and while you may have a cruise control on your car, I promise you you don't have a cruise control for life. Because about the time you think you're going to get cruising, you're going to have to hit the brakes, you're going to have to change directions, you're going to have to do something because life constantly requires adjustments.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 7:

7) *For we walk by faith and not by sight.*

The whole of the Christian life... it begins by faith, for we understand that grace demands it, but life requires faith because the only way that we can ever make sense... the only way that we can ever endure... the only way that we can ever get through some of the things that come to us in life, is simply by faith! Not faith in faith, not faith in our feelings, but the faith that is based on the substance of God's character and the evidence of His word.

This past week while the students were in California, Connie and I took a couple of days to go up to the mountains in Virginia. And we were driving north up toward Washington DC and we went through a little town called Battlefield... Battlefield. It was a place where there were a lot Civil War battlefields. But all the sudden, right there on the right there was a great big sign. You know what it said? Battlefield Baptist Church... Battlefield Baptist. And you know as I looked at Battlefield Baptist, I thought you know that's what every church is. Cause that's where the whole Christian life is! It's all about the battlefield!

And I need my faith because I engage in the conflict and the battle of this life, a life that is a fight against the lust of the flesh and the pride of

life, and the war against the soul and against the devil! But as I go through life it is in life that I need faith because the Bible tells me that we overcome in this life by our faith.

So faith matters because grace demands it, faith matters because life requires it. There's a third thing that I want you to know about faith and it's simply this: Faith matters because God accepts it... God accepts faith! In fact, it's the only thing that He accepts. So many times people want to give God all these different things. God says, "I don't want anything but one thing." The one thing that God wants... the one thing that God requires... the one thing that God accepts is that God accepts faith.

Listen to Hebrews, chapter 11 and verse 6. The Bible says:

6) And without faith it is (Say the word with me) Without faith it is what? [Impossible] Impossible (Would you say that word one more time?) Without faith it is impossible to please God.

You can't please God apart from faith. The only way that anyone can ever please God is by faith, for whoever draws near to God must believe that He exists and that He will reward those who seek Him. God honors faith because faith honors God. The Bible tells us in the Old Testament... the prophet Isaiah, chapter 53 and verse 10. It simply says that it was the will of the Lord... literally the Bible says:

10) It pleased God to crush Him... (Why would God crush His Son?) ... to grieve Him that when His soul was made an offering of sin, His... He would see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the Lord would prosper His hand.

It pleased God to crucify Christ. Jesus was crucified for the pleasure of God that you and I could be... be able to be free from the punishment and the condemnation of sin. When it comes to salvation, it's all about faith.

Do you know Jesus? Do you? Not does your church preach Jesus, not do you students know about Jesus, not did your family believe in Jesus... Do you know Jesus because the only thing that God accepts is faith.

Have you ever been standing, getting ready to make a purchase in a store or in a fast food restaurant, taken out a credit card, handed it to them, they swipe it, stand there for a minute. You're wondering what's going on. They look at you and say, "Oh, I'm sorry. We don't accept this card here?" You ever had that happen? They accept one card but they don't accept your card. That card is not accepted.

Well the Bible tells us that God doesn't accept anything but one thing and the one thing that God accepts is faith... faith that is based and founded on Jesus and what He came to do for us.

Not only did I visit some of the mountainous areas of Virginia last week, but a week ago I had the wonderful joy of going and visiting the new Billy

Graham library in Charlotte, North Carolina. When I went to the library, I was most impressed and most interested to see that the approach is basically like approaching a barn. I brought a picture with me so that you could see it. The barn ah... is there and, of course, you see the cross in the side of the barn. Why? Because when Billy was a little boy, he grew up on a dairy farm and his family in wanting to honor and remember his life never wanted to forget the roots, and so there at the Graham library there is a barn. And yet you'll notice that the only way that everyone enters the barn is by what? The doorways that is marked with the cross. When you go into the inside, there's a brilliant light coming in from the outside, and there in the open expanse of that area you see beams that are there in that place, and there on every one of those beams there is scriptures and here they are:

[Romans 5:8] "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The next one is simply this: [1 John 1:9] "If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us." And then the last beam said this [Ephesians 2:8]: "For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves..."

From the moment you walk into the front door you are presented with the message of the Gospel. And then when you get ready to leave if you'll look on that far side, there is a beautiful glass lighted image of the cross and the only way you can leave the building is one at a time, walking through the way of the cross.

That's what's required of everyone of us. That we would understand that faith matter. That faith is not just a way; it is the only way, and faith in Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. So I ask you again this morning, do you know? Do you know that you know that you know Jesus?

This book is not a wish book. I grew up every year at Christmas getting the Sears catalog just before Christmas... the big wish book, and I would lay down and look at the wish book and think about all the things that I wished and hoped and dreamed that maybe someday I would get. Anybody else here like the wish book?

Well I want you to know this isn't a wish book. This isn't a book about just the things you wish for. This is the evidence and the substance of everything that you need and everything that you long for, and everything that you hope for. It is the Promise Book! It is the book that says, "I know that I have life in Jesus Christ!" And so I ask you again. Do you... do you... do you know... Do you know Jesus?

Head's bowed and eyes closed. I'm going to ask that no one be stirring, no one moving. This is a very important moment. That the questions been presented, the message has been [music begins] declared, and now the response must be personal. We don't have a physical cross that you walk out and walk through when you leave this building, but I want you to know you've walked by the way of the cross today, you've heard the message of Christ, and it's important today for you... you individually, boy, girl,

student, adult... you to know Jesus Christ. And if you've never received Him, I want to ask you right now... I want to ask you to do what these students have asked hundreds of people to do in the last few weeks and that is to respond to Jesus Christ. If it's your desire to receive Him as your Lord and Savior, to believe Him as the Son of God, I simply ask you right now to say... just say it in your heart:

Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the Savior, the Son of the living God. And Jesus, I believe that you came, that you died, that you rose because you wanted to give me the gift of eternal life. Jesus, I'm a sinner and I'm not worthy of this gift. It's only by grace that I can come to you. But Jesus I come with my hands open in faith and I give you my life and I receive the life that you give. And I pray, Lord Jesus, that You'd let me live my life for You. Take my life, dear Jesus.

Did you pray that prayer this morning? You may be in the upper most part of the balcony today, you may be sitting right down here on the front row. But if you prayed that prayer, with no one looking, I just want to ask you, would you just lift your hand as a word of testimony, and just say to me, "Pastor, this morning I prayed to receive Jesus." Just put your hand up. God bless you. Put it up and then put it down. Put it up. Yes, up and then down. Up and down. Thank you, thank you. Others? Put it up and put it down. Yes, there in the terrace... in the terrace. There. How about in the balcony? Did you receive Jesus this morning? Did you pray that prayer?

Ah, so many prayed this morning! So many have said yes, and we thank God for you, and we thank God [clap] for this moment, and we know [clap] the power [clap] of this message [clap] in peoples' lives.

There are others of you today and you've prayed that prayer, not this morning, but before today. But in your life there's a spiritual commitment... a spiritual step that needs to be taken. Maybe you need, like others this morning, to follow Christ in baptism. Maybe you're looking for and searching for direction and a church home and a church family, and you would simply say to me, "Pastor, would you pray for me today, that I would know and do God's will about obedience, about fellowship, about commitment in my life?" Is there anybody here that would ask me to pray for them in that area this morning? Would you just put your hand up? Put it up and put it down. So... so many.

Father, I thank You this morning for each and every one of these. I thank You for the power of the Gospel. I thank you for using these students. Lord, we've not been here because this was all about us; we've been here because it's about Jesus. And I just pray right now that before we sing the final song and turn off the lights and go home, that what has been turned on in our hearts by Your Spirit, would be seen and celebrated in this moment in Jesus' name. AMEN

As you look up I want you to stand up with me. I want you to stand up because before we leave today, we're going to close this service with a

song of invitation. Simply says Lord, I'm yours. And today if you've prayed to receive Christ... today if you want to take the next step in your life of faith, following Christ in believer's baptism in an upcoming opportunity, or today you want to connect and commit to a church fellowship, we would invite you... we would welcome you to come and to be a part of Prestonwood.

"How do I do that?" I simply want to ask you to do something that's not easy to do, but it's important that you do. I'm going to ask you when we begin to sing in a moment, if you're here on the lower floor in the terrace, to just step into the aisle and just make your way here to the front.

You say, "What are you going to do? You going to point me out? You're going to call attention..." No, I don't want to do any of those things. But I do want you to remember this day... a day that you took a step of faith with Christ, the day that you said, "I'm following Christ, I mean business with what God's doing in my life."

And when you come forward, one of our ministers will be at one of the heads of these aisles. We'll have one at each aisleway, and they'll simply be here to receive you. They're going to take a moment, thank God for what He's done, then we're going to give you some material and we're just going to thank the Lord for what He's done in your life. It will be a great celebration and encouragement to this church. You don't know what this means to the hearts of these students when they see that God used them in your life today.

If you're in the balcony, you don't need to come here. I simply invite you to go there to the landing, right behind those of you in the front, right below those of you in the upper most part of the balcony. We have ministers that are there to receive you.

The important thing is this: that today, right here, right now, this time, this moment that you say yes to Christ, and that you leave here not just having heard something or felt something, but just like we said, faith is action based on the evidence of the word of God. I'm asking you to give... take a step of faith and to honor Christ in His word today. So come... come right now as we sing; come right now as we wait. Come and follow Jesus.

