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Introduction

When the emotional, spiritual, or physical "big one" could happen at any time, everyone needs to be prepared with an unshakable faith. How quickly can you be caught in a mire of unbelief or doubt? Are you unoffendable? Can your faith stand the storms of life? What is your faith built on? Is it the shaky sand of the world or the solid Word of God? The purpose of "Unshakable Faith" is to establish a firm foundation for your faith through twelve challenging messages.

The first four messages of the Unshakable Faith Series examine seven foundational scriptures undergirding most people's theology. These passages of Scripture are reconsidered in their biblical setting with a purpose of exposing wrong foundations for faith and laying the groundwork for an unshakable faith.

Chapter 1

Foundational Scriptures: Joshua 24:15 and John 1:12

Introduction

John 1:12

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

1. Another very popular evangelistic verse is John 1:12. This verse pulled out of its context is often used in evangelical tracts to teach that a man must choose to accept Christ so that he may be saved. One must be careful not to read into this verse something that is not there.
2. Based upon this verse without its context, people are often told there is something they must do before they can be saved--they must receive or accept Jesus. Secondly, as in Joshua 24:15, the inference is that man has a free will because the Bible teaches that one must accept and believe. These then become weak foundation stones in the new convert's faith.

"Receive" is not "Accept"

1. Almost without question, the word "receive" is usually interpreted to mean "accept" or "choose to believe." But on careful examination, we notice that the words "accept" and "choose" are not in verses 12-13.
2. These two verses actually teach what Joshua 24 taught: that man cannot and will not believe without a work of God in his heart. Why is it an error to interpret "receive" as "to accept with a free will?" We can eliminate that idea because verse 13 clearly states that is not the definition. One believes and being granted the power to become a child of God occurs only by the will and power of God, not the free will and power of man.
3. A passage in John 6:27 also confirms this interpretation.
 1. Jesus didn't answer this question. The answer He gave revealed how they would get spiritual food--by God's power, not their own. 6:28-29
 2. Jesus further testified that these who came to him were unbelieving. In verses 36-37 and 44, we gain more insight.

3. Also, in verse 47, we notice that those who believe are those who already have eternal life. Note the order. Which comes first, eternal life or faith?

“Receive” refers to a gift

1. Those who have been given eternal life believe because God has willed it and worked it in their hearts. John 1:12-13 confirms the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1.
2. In contrast to those who receive the Son, Jesus commented about those who cannot receive the Spirit of the Son of God (not will not, but cannot). John 14:15-17
3. Faith is a gift of God’s grace only given to His elect.
 - A. This is foundational to an unshakable faith. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you do so because God has given Jesus to you and you to Him. Faith is a gift of God’s grace only given to His elect. I Corinthians 1:29-31 affirms this interpretation.
 - B. The truth that makes for an unshakable faith is one that is based upon the power of God, not the free will of man.
 - I. Perhaps we need to redefine “free will.” If by “free will” we understand that every man is responsible before God to believe and obey God, and that no one makes us sin and we choose it ourselves without outward compulsion, then we can perhaps make a case for the existence of such an idea.
 - II. But, it is important to note that “free will” is not a biblical term, nor is it a biblical concept.
 - III. It is God who works in us through the power of His Word and Spirit to release our wills from the power of spiritual blindness and bondage. After that regenerating work of God, a man’s will is freed from its slavery to sin. But it still isn’t free! According to Romans 6: 17-18 the will is committed by God to righteousness.
4. When we chose to follow Christ, we did so by an act of our wills, but that was done by the will and power of God working by His Spirit after faith was created in our hearts.

- A. When we were born again by God's Spirit, God produced faith in our hearts. That God-given faith cleansed our hearts from an evil conscience and then worked through love moving us to follow Christ.
- B. Having said the above, we may still affirm and declare that God has made believing a condition that must be fulfilled before justification occurs. I like the way John Piper addressed this question in *Future Grace*.

Many of God's acts of grace are conditional. But conditional grace is not earned grace. It is not merited. "Earned grace" is an oxymoron. Grace cannot be earned. The very meaning of grace is that the one receiving the grace does not deserve it—has not earned it. The part of the answer that needs to be said here is that when God's grace is promised based on a condition, that condition is also a work of God's grace. (pg. 78-79 of *Future Grace*, Sisters, Oregon, Multnomah Books, 1995)

- 5. The foundation upon which the house of faith is built is God Himself. He saved us in Christ. If we try to build God's house, our faith, on the foundation of man's power to choose (which is the basic tenet of humanism), we can expect the house to crumble in the day of trials and judgment. If we base our lives on a firm foundation of God's power and will, our lives and eternity will be to the praise of His glorious grace. Such is the lesson taught in John 1:12-13.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 2

Foundational Scriptures: 1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9

Introduction

2. What is meant by doctrine? Didache -- teaching or instruction. 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:9; Titus 2:7
3. The church has been warned to be on guard against error in doctrine that appeals to our own desires. 2 Tim. 4:3
4. Faith built on wrong doctrine provides a faulty foundation upon which to stand and build.
5. As I begin this series, I think it wise to acknowledge some difficulties we might encounter as we seek to establish a firm foundation for faith.
 - A. What about people we love and for whom we have high regard?
 - B. What about ourselves?

1 Timothy 2:4

1. A Greek lesson will be helpful and decisive in the interpretation of these first verses of 1 Tim.
 - A. The Greek word for "all" or "every" is the word "pas". Greek endings and forms vary and so sometimes the form you'll see is "panton" or "pantas".
 - B. The word has two meanings depending upon a particular structure used in the Greek. Vines Dictionary of NT words, pg. 46, reads:
 - I. Used without the article it means "every", "every kind or variety". Before proper names it signifies "all" or the "whole" such as "all Israel."
 - II. Used with the article it signifies the totality of the persons or things referred to.
2. The article is missing in every use of this word in verses 1-4 of chapter 2, so we should read it to mean "all kinds" or "every kind" instead of "all, without exception". So let's now read verses 1-4.

3. What do these Scriptures teach?
 - A. That we are to pray for all kinds of men -- even political leaders for God desires to save all kinds of men -- even political leaders.
 - B. The purpose of verse 4 is to give his readers a reason for praying for kings and people in authority.

2 Peter 3:9

1. The context is the key to interpreting this passage.
 - A. The dilemma is that there are people who are mocking the message that Jesus is going to return to judge the world soon. Verses 8-9 are an answer to Jesus' delay in returning.
 - B. It is important to notice to whom Peter is speaking. He's speaking to...
 - C. Verse 7 states God's intention to destroy the ungodly.
 - D. Grammar rules help us in verse 9.

2. Why hasn't Jesus returned yet? He will not return until the last one whom He has loved has repented and come to faith in Him. When the last one for whom He died repents, let the trumpets blast and the skies unfurl. Here comes the King!

3. Verse 15 confirms this interpretation. We must regard Jesus' patience toward us to be salvation.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 3

Foundational Scriptures: John 3:1-21

Introduction

John 2:23-3:21

It is important that we look at John 3:16 in context. The line of thought begins in 2:23 and continues to 3:21. Let's begin reading there and try to follow the line of reason given by the Apostle John.

1. An Outline

- A. In 2:23-2:25: John stated that there is a kind of faith to which Jesus does not respond.
- B. In 3:1-3:21: John introduced Nicodemus as an example of such a faith.
- C. In 3:1-3:10: Jesus tested the nature of Nicodemus' faith to see if it was wrought by God.
- D. In 3:11-17: Jesus revealed the foundation stones of true saving faith through an analogy.
- E. In 3:18-21: Jesus taught Nicodemus about the judgment of God regarding both kinds of faith.

2. Now let's look at these sections and verses in more detail. In verses 2:23-3:10 we see there is a kind of faith that is natural and is not saving faith.

- A. Beginning in 2:23 we see that this kind of faith is based on signs and logically deduces that God is at work. (2:23)
- B. We read in vs 24, He didn't entrust Himself to those who believed because of signs.
 - I. John 6:26 reveals a kind of faith that is based on self-satisfaction. But verse 36 indicates that Jesus could tell it wasn't the kind of faith worked by God.
 - II. Judas and the rich young ruler exemplify this type of faith. One that comes for selfish gain.
 - III. In Matt. 7:13-24 we read of people who believed because of the signs and the fantastic experiences that came with Jesus.

- C. This is the kind of faith exemplified in Nicodemus.
- I. We read here in 3:2 what John referred to in 2:23: Nicodemus believed that God was with Jesus because of the signs.
 - II. It is helpful to note that according to Rom. 10:17 saving faith comes by hearing, not seeing signs.
- D. In vs. 3-9, we notice that Jesus brought the spiritual light into Nicodemus' darkness to expose the nature of his coming--his coming is of flesh and not Spirit. He did this by making statements regarding the work of the Holy Spirit and the kind of faith that sees the kingdom of God.
- I. He told him of spiritual things--things he would understand only if he had experienced them.
 - II. In verse 3, we see that Jesus tested Nicodemus by telling him of the new birth by the Holy Spirit that enables one to see the kingdom of God. What is meant by the kingdom of God? The rule or the advance of a king's power and dominion. (v. 3)
 - III. Nicodemus' response revealed the nature of his coming--it was natural and void of the Spirit's work. In vs. 4, we see that he was thinking in the natural realm.
 - IV. In vs. 5-8 we read that Jesus continued the test, speaking of the work of the Spirit. Again he told Nicodemus that one must be born a second time, this time by the Spirit of God. He told him three truths about the work of the Spirit.
 - The Spirit uses the Word (water; John 15:2) to accomplish the new birth.
 - The Spirit gives birth to spirit whereas that done naturally can only produce natural.
 - The Spirit's work is unpredictable. You can't plan it or control it. When it happens to someone, they are aware of the Spirit's presence and work, but couldn't tell you how it came to them nor where it is going to take them. They just know they've been affected by His power.
 - V. In verse 9 we see that Nicodemus again revealed that he didn't understand.

3. In vs. 10-21, Jesus gave Nicodemus a lesson on faith and how to recognize someone who truly believes and someone who doesn't. There are 3 foundation stones for faith that give the Holy Spirit something with which to work.
 - A. Foundation Stone #1: Saving faith must be based on God's Word. vs. 10-17
 - B. Foundation Stone #2: One must primarily rest his faith on the One God has lifted up for all men to believe upon and trust in. 3:14-15; John 12:43-45
 - C. Foundation Stone #3: Faith rests in God's love. The second part of the analogy is in vs. 16-17.
 - D. The wrong stone: "For God loved the world so much, that He gave..." putting the stress on the "so much". This verse has been used to appeal to a person's emotions and sense of personal worthiness. God loves everyone so much that He gave His son. They've emphasized the personal aspect, which as you notice here is totally absent from the text. The illustration isn't a personal one, it is corporate.
 - E. I think it is best to consider the context of this verse when we come to this word "world." Jesus was speaking to THE teacher of the pharisees and certainly Nicodemus had the typical Jewish mindset that God's favor and love was only upon the Jew. The rest of the world was outside the scope of God's redemptive plan and purpose. Israel was the elect of God. Jesus' comment about God's love for the world should be understood from that perspective. He was telling Nicodemus that the Spirit of God isn't limited to blowing just upon the Jews; He was blowing upon everyone who believed in the world--both Jew and Gentile. Why? Because of the same electing love as was expressed to Israel in the offer of deliverance that day when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.

- F. In verse 17, Jesus told Nicodemus that the Son of God wasn't sent this first time into the world to judge the world, but rather so the world could be saved. In the same way the serpent was God's provision for Israel's salvation, so Jesus is God's provision for the world. But who is it in the world that is to be saved? Having given the three foundations for faith, the witness of the prophets, and His own atoning work, and the electing love of God, Jesus reveals how one can distinguish the work of faith produced by God from the one that is natural and fleshly.
4. In verses 18-21, we see that there is a judgment regarding those who don't believe and those who have a true faith.
- A. Those who do not believe have already been judged (perf. act. ind.) and there are two characteristics given about them.
 - I. Unbelievers love darkness rather than light.
 - II. Unbelievers are afraid of exposure.
 - B. Those who believe and keep on believing in the Son of God as God's provision for deliverance from sin's power to kill eternally are not judged. Three characteristics of true faith are revealed in vs. 18-21.
 - 1. True faith is enduring, present, active. vs. 18
 - 2. True faith is fixed on God's Word and on Jesus Christ's work on the cross and God's witness regarding Him. Rom. 3:23-25; Acts 26:26
 - 3. True faith practices truth by allowing God to reveal, that which is of flesh and that which is wrought by God, the Holy Spirit. The humility is shown in that one who has saving faith wants to see God get all the glory for the work that is done.
 - C. These last verses would have been very piercing to Nicodemus.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 4

Foundational Scriptures: Romans 10:9-10 and Revelation 3:20

Introduction

The idea of inviting Christ into one's heart is a relatively new idea. It came with the implementation of the altar call that began in the 1800's.

Presently, let's begin in Rom. 10 and then go to Rev. 3:20 and perhaps John 1:12 and gain a clear understanding of what the passages don't teach as well as what they do teach.

Rom. 10:8-21

The Context

1. In Chapters 9-11, Paul wrote to the Romans and explained God's working with the Jews and the Gentiles with regards to salvation.
 - A. That the Jews had failed to attain a righteousness before God due to their wrong doctrine regarding salvation: they thought that one was saved by works, by something they did. And at the first of ch. 10, he states that they were extremely zealous, but their zeal was not according to knowledge and thus they failed to be justified before God.
 - B. In contrast to the Jews, the Gentiles had attained a righteousness they hadn't even pursued. They attained it by faith instead of by works.
2. In 10:1-5, Paul commented further on why the Jews missed God's righteousness -- they sought to establish themselves before God and would not subject themselves to God's righteousness.
 - A. The same thing has happened in modern evangelism.
 - B. They did it by making faith a work and they redefined faith as an act of the will whereby one accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And that is done by one's praying, professing sin, followed by an invitation for Christ to come into his heart and life.
 - C. Today, millions of people all over the world have done these things and then were told that they were saved and would live eternally with God.

- D. As a result, at this very time, in churches all over the world, there are people who appear to be God's people (like the Jews) who have pursued righteousness, but have not attained to it because they pursued it by works instead of by faith. They don't live righteous lives, in fact, they appear unchanged except they say they are saved and go to church regularly.
3. In vs. 6-7 he told them what not to say, and in essence he told them that they were preaching to them what he called "the word of faith." By that he meant that salvation is by faith. He had said that from the first of the letter in 1:16-17. In chapters 4-5, he wrote more about justification by faith. Again, Paul contrasted works and faith.
- A. In works, the person has the idea that his salvation is due him because he did what was required.
 - B. But the one justified by faith believes in God who justifies the ungodly without his doing anything. And that faith is reckoned as righteousness.

The Word of Faith: Read 10:8-10

1. The word for word here is rhema. Vines distinguishes it from logos in the following manner: Rhema denotes that which is spoken, what is uttered in speech or writing; Logos denotes the expression of thought. The significance of rhema (as distinct from logos) is exemplified in the injunction to take the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," Eph. 6:17; here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scriptures which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture.
2. The first thing we want to note is that faith is a matter of heart, not will.
3. There are some important words in vs. 9.
 - A. **Confess:** homologeio--homo means "the same as" and logeio means "to say." So, confession is one's saying the same as someone else. Before someone can confess, they must first hear.
 - B. **Heart:** That's where faith takes place. It is with the heart that man believes. As you study the NT and the word heart and its relation to faith, you'll notice that faith is a condition of heart. It is something that comes into the heart by means of God's Word--as we'll see here in this passage.
 - C. **Righteousness:** Means right standing. It is the position of favor and blessing. The very thing we desire to attain.

D. The mouth simply confesses what the heart has seen and believes.

Whoever believes and whoever calls:

1. Paul directed the Roman's attention to the broad scope of the gospel promise.
2. The riches of God have not been limited to the Jews for the promises of God are not limited to the Jews.
3. Who are the whoevers and how do they come to believe? vs. 14-17.
4. However: On the contrary. In other words, not as you would expect. Isaiah was sent along with the other prophets to Israel, time and time again, and he wrote, "Lord, who has believed our report?" Very few did believe in Israel and they had preacher after preacher sent to them.
 - A. So, faith doesn't come just because someone hears the gospel message from a preacher. Faith comes from hearing, and hearing comes by the Word of Christ. The word here for word is again, rhema.
 - B. Who are the whoevers? Whoever hears the Word of God by the Spirit. And how do they come to believe? Jesus Christ causes the Word of God to be believed when He speaks to their hearts.

Revelation 3:14-22

The context

1. The message is to the church at Laodicea.
2. After his introduction, he stated their spiritual condition as a church.
3. Jesus admonished them to look to Him for their dress which usually refers to their basis for standing before God. He calls on them to repent of their confidence in themselves and receive His rebuke. In reality, the church stood in need of Jesus' manifest presence and a deeper fellowship and the Lord Jesus is standing at the door of the church ready to enter and bestow that blessing.

Vs. 20: He promises to come into their lives in a more intimate way than He already has with a deeper sense of fellowship and communion.

Vs. 22 then underscores that this message is to the churches -- not the lost.

Why is this so important?

1. When we see that our faith is from God, our confidence is in God. When we think our faith is from us, our confidence is in us and our believing becomes a work.

2. If we don't understand these things, we will lead our own children and others to pray prayers of invitation to Christ and assure them that God doesn't lie when He says He will come in.
3. God intended us to be assured in our hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord and that the faith we have in Him is evidence of His forgiveness and love for us in Christ. We're to know that God is for us!
4. These truths ought to exercise our hearts to a greater love for God and for others.
5. It takes the focus off us and puts it on God's grace and glory.
6. I Cor. 2:3-11

Study Notes.....

Chapter 5

God, Who and What is He?

Introduction

1. God is the center.

A. Notice the theocentric perspective of the apostle Paul. Rom. 11:36, I Cor. 8:6, Col. 1:16-17

B. God's view of Himself. Is. 46:5,9-10, Is. 45:5-7

2. What is God?

The Westminster Confession of Faith states,

"God is _____." John 4:24

He is _____, Job 11:7

He is _____, Ps. 90:2

He is _____; James 1:17

in His _____, Ex. 3:14

in His _____ Ps. 147:5 and _____,

in His _____, Rev. 4:8

in His _____,
_____, & _____. Ex. 34:5-6

3. Who is God?

A. He is one God, Deut. 6:4, but three persons; Matt. 28:19

B. Who are:

- The Father -- Gal. 1:1
- The Son -- John 5:18; John 10:30
- The Holy Spirit -- Acts 5:3-4

C. The doctrine of the trinity arose out of the belief and practice of the early church. The church worshipped and related to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the same in essence and equal in power and glory.

D. An analogy may be helpful in understanding the concept of trinity.

1. Our thoughts are invisible, and are us. The thoughts of God are His Word with Him and they are Him. John 1:1-3, Prov. 23:7
2. Our words and actions are the expression of our thoughts and are us. The Word of God and His actions expressed reveal His thoughts and are Him. The revelation of God's Word in flesh is the Son (the exact visible expression of God's Word, equal to, but distinct from the Father). Matt. 12:34-36, Heb. 1:3
3. Our words and actions have purpose and have an impact and are us. The Word of God always accomplishes its purpose and has an impact and is God. This impact of God's Word is equal to but distinct from the Father and the Son, but goes forth from them. The result is the manifestation of the Spirit of God (the power). John 5:26, Is. 55:11

Study Notes.....

Chapter 6

God's Purposes in Creation

Introduction

God is our Creator.

1. Only God creates (bara'). He created all things... Gen. 1:1
2. ...out of nothing... Heb. 11:3
3. ...in six days... Ex. 20:11
4. ...by and for Jesus Christ. Col. 1:16

Principle: There is no effect without cause. Mankind is here for His glory. "The earth is the Lord's" and you are part of it.

God created man in His own image

1. He created man, male and female. Gen. 1:27
2. "Adam" -- Hebrew for "dust" or "ground"
3. "In His image"-possessed a spiritual nature
 - A. Moral nature
 - B. Individual conscience
 - C. Intellectual powers by which he could know about his sphere of existence.
 - D. Perpetual existence
 - E. Power of contrary choice (controlled by the prevailing motive of his heart).

Principle: Man is morally responsible before God.

Choices are controlled by the condition of the heart of a man.

1. Heart: OT-the conscious self-the inner person with every function that makes a person human. NT-The center of man's being-the conscious awareness each of us has that makes us persons. It is used referring to the mind, the conscience, and the spirit of man.
2. The Bible teaches it. Prov. 4:23; Prov. 23:7
3. The Bible gives examples of it.
 - A. Pharoah. Ex. 4:21
 - B. The sons of Israel in contributing to the tabernacle. Ex. 25:2; Ex. 35:21
 - C. Sihon, king of Heshbon-not willing to let Israel pass through. Deut. 2:30
 - D. The fool speaks in his heart and then acts accordingly. Ps. 14:1
 - E. Firmness of heart has authority over will. 1 Cor. 7:37
 - F. Bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in the heart produce worldly action. James 3:14 -18
4. Logic supports it.
 - A. If an act of the will must be preceded by an act of the will, then can that act of the will be defined as "free"?
 - B. It is only logical to say that there is an act of the will, which is not, determined by itself which influences all acts of the will.
 - C. If the first act is not free, then none are free.
 - D. What influences that first act? The Bible reveals that it is man's heart. Although the will acts, it is not free by any sense of the term "free."
5. There is no such thing as "free will" if we mean that our wills are not influenced by other forces.
 - A. The will does act continually.

B. As we will see, man is morally responsible for his decisions. But...

6. The fact that God makes him responsible does not imply that he has the ability to choose free of influences of his wicked heart and the conditioning of his forefathers and society.
7. The dilemma each man faces is his inability to choose free from the selfishness of his own wicked heart. Deut. 5:27b-29; Rom. 3:10-12; Rom. 8:6-8
8. Other generations rejected the "free will" doctrine until humanism gained acceptance.
 - Pelagius around 400 A.D. Rejected as heresy. Primary defender was Augustine.
 - 1300's. Called semi-Pelagianism. Rejected as heresy. Primary defenders were John Calvin and Martin Luther .
 - Arminians in 1610. Rejected as heresy. Primary defender was the council of Dort.
 - Influence of humanism and the enlightenment.
 - Charles Fenney taught "free will" and based his methods of evangelism on it.
 - Ministers imitated Fenney's methods and therefore accepted "free will" doctrine.

Principle: The fruit of one's life (the choices of the will) demonstrates the condition of the heart.

All creation exists for God's purposes -- His glory.

1. All things exist for Him. 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15 -16
2. God's purpose for creation and history is one: glorify Jesus Christ. He is working all things according to that purpose and after the counsel of His will, not his knowledge of what will occur. Eph. 1:9-11
3. God has different purposes for people. Prov. 16:4; Is. 10:5-7; Is. 46:9-10

Principle: Nothing is created with its purpose unknown. God has decreed whatever comes to pass by the counsel of His will (not by the counsel of His knowledge of what will occur.)

God has created two groups of people with two different purposes.

1. The wicked.

- A. Also known as:
 - ...Children of the devil. 1 John 3:8
 - ...Those who dwell on earth. Rev. 13:8
 - ...Those who disbelieve or are disobedient. 1 Pet. 2:7-8
 - ...The world. John 15:19
- B. Their purpose is to bring about the "day of evil" in history. They provide the backdrop for the display of God's glory in Jesus Christ—forgiveness, grace, mercy, love, goodness, justice, holiness, light, wrath, etc. Prov. 16:4
- C. Their wickedness and disobedience result from their minds being blinded by the god of this world... 2 Cor. 4:3-4
 - ...because of their own heart condition and choice. I Pet. 2:8b
- D. They love the approval of the world so God authorizes their blindness....John 12:39-40
 - ...as was appointed according to their purpose. I Pet. 2:8b
- E. God does not know them in Christ. Matt. 7:23
- F. They are as the beast that perishes in God's eyes. Ps. 49:12, 20
 - ...but He does not take pleasure in destruction of the wicked. Ezek. 33:11

2. The righteous.

- A. Also known as:
 - ...The Chosen of God. I Pet. 1:1
 - ...Sons or children of God. Rom. 8:14 , 16
 - ...God's People. Matt. 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:9-10
 - ...Jesus' possession. John 6:37; John 10:14, 29
 - ...The Redeemed or purchased ones. Rev. 5:9
 - ...New creations in Christ. 2 Cor. 5:17

- B. Their purpose is to proclaim and show forth the light of Jesus in history. 1 Pet. 2:9-10
 ...against the backdrop of darkness and wickedness. They have been known by God in Christ, so Jesus knows them. 1 Cor. 1:30
- C. Their righteousness results from their union with Christ. I Cor. 1:30; Rom. 8:2
- D. Their faith is wrought by God. John 6:29; John 3:21; Rom. 10:17
 ...as was appointed. Acts 13:48
 ...according to God's purpose in Christ from all eternity. 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:9; Rom. 8:28-29
- E. They are totally different creatures from the wicked in God's eyes. Ps. 116:15

Principle: God has a purpose for the wicked and a purpose for the righteous. He created both for His purpose.

Purpose pre-determines God's care and actions.

1. Predestined-"To mark out ahead of time." Rom. 8:28-29; Acts 4:18; 24-28; Rom. 9:19-24; Eph. 1:11
2. Examples in the Bible
 - A. God pre-determined to deal with Israel on the grounds of law because of His purpose. Zech. 1:6
 - B. The one's who believed were the ones appointed to believe. Acts 13:48; Rev. 17:17
3. Analogy of the potter and the clay.
4. Certain deductions may be drawn therefore from this principle.
 - A. The care (repentance, faith, sanctification by the Spirit) that one receives from God reveals what God's purpose is for him.
 - B. If one knows God's purpose for him, he can be assured of God's care.

1. God's using all circumstances for good -- conformity to Christ-likeness.
2. God's giving grace at the time of need.
3. God's leading by His Spirit.
4. Eternal life with God.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 7

God's Purposes for Sin and the Fall - Part 1

Introduction

First Foundational Fact:

God decreed the fall of man and the entrance of sin into the world.

1. What are the decrees of God?

Dr. Wayne Grudem

The Baptist Confession of 1689

*God has decreed in Himself (decided by Himself) from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things which shall ever come to pass. (Nothing forced Him in the making of any of His plans, and all His intentions will be carried out without the slightest alteration.)
--Yet in such a way that God is neither the author of sin nor does He have fellowship (mutual responsibility) with any in the committing of sins, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature (no one is made to sin), nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, (ie: nor is the free working of the law of cause and effect interfered with) but rather established.*

2. We know the fall was decreed because it is a part of the "all things."
(Colossians 1:15-16, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Romans 11:33-36)
3. We know that all things have occurred according to the counsel of His will. It was God's will that sin enter through one man and be imputed to all men.
(Romans 5:12, 3:12, 1 Cor. 15:22)

Second Foundational Fact:

God designed the fall of man and the entrance of sin into the world. There are four reasons that lead us to believe that God decreed and designed the fall of man. All of them have to do with the elements, which contributed to Adam's sinful act.

1. Element #1: God created Adam in His own image (Gen. 1:27)
2. Element #2: God gave Adam a law (Gen. 2:17)

- A. God didn't have to give Adam a law. The scriptures reveal the purpose of law. It makes sin possible.
 - There can be no violation without law (Romans 4:15).
 - Law also has a way of arousing the passions and desires within man (Romans 7:5, 7-8).
 - Sin has no power without law (1 Corinthians 15:56).
- B. God is not unjust or unrighteous to test the positive righteousness He gave to Adam. The law is righteous and good according to Paul.
- C. By creating the elements that could result in the fall, God was making the way for man to disqualify himself and for God to glorify Jesus Christ in history. (Romans 4:16)

3. Element #3: God designed the jurisdiction of spiritual darkness.

- A. God created Satan and authorized him as the agent of destruction, darkness, temptation, and death.
- B. Satan is under God's jurisdiction, but he always acts according to his nature. Remember Col. 1:16
- C. We know that God does not tempt (James 1:13-14; John 8:44).
- D. Satan was authorized to tempt Adam and Eve according to the prevailing motive of their hearts-the desire to be like God. Gen. 3
- E. The story of Job gives insight into God's jurisdiction over Satan

4. Element #4: God could have done otherwise. Summary of the first foundational fact regarding the fall and the entrance of sin into the world.

- Fact One: God decreed the fall of man and sin's entrance into the world.
- Fact Two: God designed the fall of man and sin's entrance into the world.
 - A. He did so without violating Adam's will.
 - B. His plan did not remove man's responsibility before God.
 - C. His plan was righteous and wise.
 - D. There are four reasons we believe God designed the fall and entrance of sin into the world.
 - I. He created man with the prevailing motive to be like God.
 - II. He gave Adam a law.
 - III. He authorized Satan to tempt Adam according to the prevailing motive of his heart.
 - IV. It was within His power to do otherwise.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 8

God's Purposes for Sin and the Fall - Part 2

Introduction

Foundational Facts #3-4

Regarding God's Purposes for Sin and the Fall

1. Sin is one of the saddest but also one of the most common phenomena of human life. It is part of the common experience of mankind (Berkof).
2. Various theories regarding sin.
 - A. An illusion
 - B. An unavoidable defect
 - C. A lack of God consciousness that would disappear when a sense of God awakens man.
 - D. A lack of trust in God due to ignorance.
 - E. Selfishness (This was one of Finney's notions combined with Pelagius)
 - F. The opposition of lower tendencies in human nature to a developing moral consciousness.
 - G. Pelagius believed that sin consists only of separate acts of the will. He didn't believe there was such a thing as a sinful nature or sinful disposition. He also didn't believe sin affected the heart of man. Sin is a deliberate choice of evil by a perfectly free will, which can choose to follow good, as well as evil. He concluded this due to another false presupposition: That if God commanded man to do good, then man must have the ability to do it. That error was based on the notion that Adam was created morally neutral instead of with a positive righteousness.

The Scriptural Idea of Sin

1. Sin is a specific kind of evil.
2. Sin is also absolute, positive evil, not just a lesser degree of goodness.
3. Sin involves relationship with God and His will.
4. Guilt and corruption are associated with sin; guilt-deserving condemnation.
5. In the Scriptures, when sin is referred to, it is often associated with the heart.
6. Sin isn't limited to outward actions.

Foundational Fact #3 Regarding Sin and the Fall

The condition of the heart of every man since Adam is one of self-service, darkness, and death.

The Extent of Sin's Corruption

1. First indication of sin's devastating effects is found in Gen. 6:5.
2. Secondly, we see that the fall of Adam into sin implanted evil inclinations (Gen. 8:21).
3. Thirdly, notice the deceitfulness of the heart in the natural man (Jer. 17:9-10).
 - A. The heart is so deceitful we can think we are loving God and doing good and not be aware of our selfish motives.
 - B. Ps. 36:1-4 provides insight into how the heart deceives.
4. The human heart is a treasury of evil (Mark 7:14-21).
5. Hearts that don't fear God (Rom. 3:10-18)
6. Even babies? (Ps. 51:5 and 58:3)
 - A. Scriptures say:
 - B. The notion of an age of accountability comes from a wrong view of the extent of sin's influence in the fall. Scripture portrays man accountable from birth.
 - C. Consider what we are saying if we believe that babies are born innocent and then become guilty at an age of accountability.
 - D. The truth is that no Scripture indicates all babies and small children who die go to heaven. But also they do not teach that all babies go to hell. (Rom. 9:16; Luke 1:15)
7. The natural heart is hardened and calloused (Eph. 4:17-24).
8. The natural heart is foolish and darkened (Rom. 1:18, 21-24, 28-32).

Foundational Fact #4 Regarding God's Purposes for Sin and the Fall

God's purpose for sin and the fall of man is to show forth His goodness in Jesus Christ, which is His glory.

1. When we think about the fact that we are enemies of God -- hostile, hardened, deceived, darkened, and inventors of evil -- which God has chosen to save some can only be because of His goodness (Exodus 33:18-19).
2. Mankind on probation: When we say someone is on probation, we understand that they have transgressed the law and their punishment has been suspended.
3. God has chosen to be merciful to 'vessels of mercy' for the glory of His Son (Rom. 9:21-24).

Summary of Four Foundational Facts

1. God decreed the fall of man and the entrance of sin and death.
2. God designed the fall of man and the entrance of sin and death with a purpose.
3. The condition of the heart of every man since Adam is one of self-service, darkness, and death.
4. God's purpose for the fall of man and the presence of sin and death is to show forth His goodness and glory in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 9

The Call of God

Introduction

THE Question:

How can one whose will is enslaved to the spiritual condition of his heart, whose heart is motivated by the prevailing motive of self-ambition, self-service, and self-protection, whose choices, even to do good, are for his own benefit and glory rather than God's, whose sins have offended a holy, just God ever be right with God?

THE Answer:

Salvation must be all of God because man is helpless.

What must God do to justify Himself and those He has chosen?

1. Justification
2. He has done so in His Son! Jesus Christ's righteous life and sacrificial death fully satisfied God's just and righteous demands for those baptized into Him by God (Romans 3:22-27; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Col. 1:20-23).
3. Having once reconciled His people, whom He gave to His Son through Him, God must now change the condition of their hearts in order for them to...
 - A. Know and believe that they have been justified and have been known by God.
 - B. Be set free from the power of sin and all of its affects to the praise of His glorious grace.

How does God change the heart and how do His people know they are justified and called by God to be His children?

1. By the power of His Word and through the Holy Spirit, God grants repentance and faith in the heart. That is how they know and believe they are justified and called by God to be His children (1 Pet. 1:23; John 3:5).
2. God applies justification to the hearts of his people by giving them repentant hearts (Acts 5:31, Acts 11:18, 2 Tim. 2:24-25). Repentance is...

- A. The reason repentance is necessary is that it leads to salvation (2 Cor. 7:9-11). Notice also Acts 11:18 and 2 Tim. 2:25-26.
 - B. There is no salvation without repentance (Rom. 2:4-6).
 - C. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to produce repentance in the heart (Acts 11:13-18; Acts 16:14).
3. As God gives repentance, He also gives faith to the heart of His people.
- A. Faith is _____. (Heb. 11:1).
 - B. We notice that faith is a condition of heart. (Luke 8:11-12, 15; Luke 24:25; John 14:1; Rom. 10:9-10).
 - C. The gift of faith to the heart is how we know that we are known and are His! It isn't something we can do (Acts 15:7-12; Rom. 6:17-18; Eph. 2:8-10).
 - D. There is no salvation without faith. God counts that faith which He gives us as the righteousness of Christ! (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 1:17).
 - E. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to produce saving faith in the heart (Rom. 10:17).
 - F. The faith that God gives acts as a shield and protector of His children and keeps them until the end. It also works love in the heart and remains throughout life as evidence of the new birth and gives assurance (Eph. 6:16; 1 Pet. 1:4-5; Gal. 5:6).
4. God, having produced repentance and faith in the hearts of His people justifies them on the basis of faith placed in and upon Jesus Christ.
- A. He counts that faith, which He requires and gives, as righteousness. (Rom. 4:5; Rom. 5:1-2).
 - B. God's giving repentance and faith constitutes the call of God to those whom He purposed in eternity to exist to the glory of His grace (Rom. 8:28-31; Rom. 9:22-24; Rom. 11:28; 2 Cor. 6:16-18).
 - C. It is not possible to resist this call of God. It is powerful and has been decreed from all eternity (Ps. 110:1-3; 2 Tim. 1:9).
 - D. The particular and specific call of God unto salvation should be distinguished from the general and universal gospel call to all men (Matt. 22:14).

Study Notes.....

Chapter 10

Evangelism, God's Way

Introduction

Why is the church to witness?

1. First, the church has been commissioned by the Lord Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20).
2. Second, we witness because the church has been empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness. Jesus Christ is seeking and reaching His lost sheep through His people (Acts 1:8; 2:41-47; 4:31).

What is evangelism?

1. Evangelism is being God's instrument of light (grace and truth) in the world (Matt. 5:14-16).
2. There are three kinds of witnessing.
 - A. Being Christ-like in lifestyle and walk (Matt. 5:14-16; Ephesians 4:17,24; 5:1-2).
 - B. Proclaiming the gospel (Acts 8:35; 16:31-32; 1 Cor. 1:21-24).
 - C. Extending the call to obedience and discipleship (Acts 2:37-40; 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1).
3. There are three necessary ingredients in evangelism.
 - A. God.
 - I. The Father draws to Jesus those whom He has chosen (John 6:44).
 - II. The Son, removed the wrath of God in His suffering death and saves them through His ever-living intercession (Rom. 5:9-10; Heb. 7:25).
 - III. The Holy Spirit regenerates and renews those whom God has chosen.
 - B. The Word of God (Rom. 1:16; I Peter 2:23).
 - C. The obedient, Spirit-following believer (Acts 2:42-47 [Peter]; 8:25-40 [Philip]; 2 Cor. 5:20).
4. There is one motive--LOVE!

5. Keep in step with the Spirit of God.
 - A. Your goal is to help the person see what God is doing in their lives, to interpret the events of life by using the Scriptures.
 - B. You want to discover what the Holy Spirit is doing in their lives (where they are on the chart) so that you can know what Scripture to share with them with confidence that the Holy Spirit will apply it in power to their lives.
 - I. First, they need to understand what and who God is. God uses His Word for this.
 - II. Second, they need to understand the effect of the fall, their enmity toward God, and their helplessness to justify themselves. God gives a person over to their sin to teach them this and uses His Word.
 - III. Third, they need to learn what God did in Jesus Christ to justify His people. He uses His Word for this.
 - IV. Fourth, they need to see what God is doing in giving them repentance and faith to have knowledge of forgiveness, assurance, and hope.
 - C. Ways to discover what the Holy Spirit is doing.
 - I. Build relationships.
 - II. Ask questions, listening for signs of God's working and for their idols.
 - Do you have an interest in spiritual things?
 - Tell me about yourself.
 - Have you ever wondered why that is occurring? The Bible says...
 - Has your relationship with God been satisfying? If they say yes, ask them to tell you about it. If they say no, ask them if they would like to hear how it can be.
 - Take an interest in them as people, not as potential converts. You're there to love.
 - III. Make comments or mention something you are going through, in order to see if there is openness.
 - IV. Invite them to a worship service, Bible study, or fellowship event.
 - D. Give the Holy Spirit time to work with the truth or Scriptures given them.

Evangelism, God's Way: Remember

1. We witness because we've been commanded and empowered to witness.
2. Evangelism is being God's instrument of light in the darkness. It's a lifestyle, which makes your proclamation powerful.
3. For true evangelism to take place, God is working, the Word is used, and you follow the Spirit's leading.
4. The motive for evangelism is love, not the decision of the person.
5. Learn God's order of salvation so that you can discern what God is doing in people's lives.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 11

Leading Your Children to Christ

Introduction

Review of Applicable Truths

1. Salvation is a matter of the heart.
2. The heart of a child is dead in sin.
3. God must give them repentance and faith.

Some Dangers to Consider

1. Children are easily persuaded and impressed.
2. Children reared in Christian homes must be taught that there is a difference between hearing truth with their heads and hearing truth with their hearts.

Some Helpful Suggestions

1. Teach them God's requirements, their hearts' enmity, and their need for mercy and righteousness.
 - A. The use of the Law of God (1 Tim. 1:8-11)
 - B. Your consistent discipline using the rod and reproof in the early years of life is important if they are to understand their responsibility before God.
2. If you are faithful to obey God's word in the early years, God will not have to use His rod (civil government) in the later years (Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 23:14; 29:15).
3. It was a helpful lesson about using the rod.
 - A. The purpose of the rod is not for breaking the will.
 - B. Determine ahead of time what offenses merit the rod, how many swats will be given, and be consistent.
 - C. When your child transgresses God's law and your word, explain...

- D. Use the opportunity to teach them of Jesus' having taken our stripes and having been wounded for our transgressions that we might have peace with God (Isaiah 53:4-7).
 - E. Maintain their hearts' direction toward you.
 - F. Keep godly examples before your children.
4. Hold out to them the promises of God in the gospel and our confession regarding Jesus Christ (Col. 1:3-6). Promises such as: 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1; John 6:35, 37; Rom. 10:11, 13; Luke 11:9-13.
 5. It is important to lead them to live in relationship with Him.
 6. When God assures their hearts, encourage them to obedience in baptism.
 7. The importance of prayer should not be overlooked. God has ordained prayer as well as the gospel as the means by which salvation is administered.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 12

An Unshakable Faith

Introduction

How does a man acquire an unshakable faith?

The book of Hebrews contains a basis for an unshakable faith, an important warning, a wonderful promise and hope, an explanation of what occurs when we disregard the warning, and an encouragement which leads to a glorious peace and healing in relationships.

What is your confession about Jesus Christ? Have you realized its importance and function?

A Christian's Confession of Faith Found in Hebrews

Jesus Christ, God's Son, is our high priest. He sits at the right hand of God where He intercedes and runs all things by the power of His word. He is and will preserve and save our souls through suffering by giving us mercy and grace.

The Basis for an Unshakable Faith--Jesus running all things by His Word.

An Important Warning--No one shall escape God's reproof that neglects Jesus' word.

1. We must pay close attention to Jesus' word. 2:1-3
2. Why? Because God has subjected the entire world to Jesus. 2:5-8
3. God has qualified Him to be our high priest and rendered the devil powerless through His suffering temptation and death on behalf of His people. 2:6-18.
4. So, since God has given us such a high priest as Jesus Christ who has faithfully spoken His word, we...
5. Remember: God's people didn't escape God's discipline when they neglected God's word through Moses. 3:16-19

A Wonderful Promise and Hope--

You may enter God's Rest

1. We should fear not entering and living in the rest-peace and wholeness-of God. 4:1-2
2. God spoke of His rest through His messengers. 4:3-8
3. The one who believes Jesus is reigning through His word and believes in Him enters the promised rest.
4. Hope rests on the fact that nothing escapes God's word. Nothing is out of control!
5. Our hope rests on the fact that Jesus is our high priest. 4:14-5:11
 - A. We don't need to build another foundation for our promises and hopes. 5:12-6:12
 - B. The main point is this: We have Jesus as our high priest who reigns over all things and who has perfectly, completely discharged His duties before God and on behalf of man thus instituting a new and better covenant than that which previously existed. 8:1-10:18
6. We may have confidence to draw near to God through Jesus and enter into His rest in any situation -- holding fast our confession that Jesus Christ is faithful on our behalf to give us grace and mercy.. 10:19-25.
7. If those who set aside God's word through Moses died without mercy, how much more severe one can expect the punishment to be for those who trample under foot the work of God through Jesus. So, let us endure in our faith until we receive what God has promised. 10:26-39
8. Faith is characterized by the assurance of things hoped for and conviction of things not seen. It is by believing in Jesus' intercession and ministry on our behalf that we gain approval and glorify God. 11:1-2

An explanation of what occurs when we don't believe in Jesus' word and reign--

Our Father disciplines His children by withholding grace so that we'll repent.

1. He disciplines us because we are sons. 12:5-9
2. He disciplines us so that we might be trained to believe Him and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. 12:1-7
3. He disciplines us because as we learn to believe in Jesus, we enter into the rest of God. 12:10-11

4. He disciplines us by withholding grace to pursue peace with others and overcome bitterness and to live holy lives. 12:14-15.
5. He disciplines us until we find a place to repent for not believing Jesus' word and trusting in His rule over all things. 12:15-17.

An encouragement which leads to peace and healing--

Lay aside unbelief in Jesus' word and faithfulness as He controls everything through His intercession. Look for a place to repent when you fall short of grace to love.

1. The sin that so easily entangles us is unbelief in Jesus's word, intercession, and ruling over all things--in short--we shrink from our confession.
2. We must fix our eyes on Jesus. 12:2
3. If we're being disciplined, let's receive it and get with the program.
4. Remember the promises of Jesus: 12:18-24
5. Remember the earlier warning: See to it that you don't refuse to listen to this word through Jesus Christ. 12:25-29
6. In light of this foundation for faith, let us live holy lives. 13:1-7
7. May God equip you in every good thing to do His will through Jesus Christ. 13:20-21

A Response--

Find a place to repent if you can't love, are bitter, or are ensnared in a desire to get what you want right now.

1. Repent of not believing Jesus is in control of your life and the events and relationships in life.
2. Repent for not believing that what you have is exactly what you need to trust in Jesus and demonstrate His love.
3. Fix your eyes on Jesus.
4. Determine to pursue peace and heal relationships.
5. Thank God as an offering of sacrifice and a statement of your confession.

Study Notes.....