

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Faith That Wavers

KEY PASSAGE: James 1:6-7 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Numbers 13-14; 32:23 | Deuteronomy 31:6
Isaiah 41:9-13 | 2 Corinthians 5:8 | Galatians 6:7 | 1 John 1:9

► SUMMARY

Faith is an essential aspect of the Christian life because it is the avenue through which we are saved by God's grace and the means by which we are to live thereafter.

When we believe and obey what the Lord says in His Word, our faith grows stronger; but when we let our feelings and circumstances override our confidence in Him and His promises, our faith begins to waver.

► SERMON POINTS

A Past Example of Wavering Faith

Although the Lord had repeatedly demonstrated His faithfulness to the Israelites by miraculously delivering them from Egyptian slavery, parting the Red Sea for their escape, and leading them through the wilderness, when they arrived at the border of the Promised Land, their faith faltered.

After Moses sent spies into Canaan, they reported that the land was good. However, 10 of them discouraged the Israelites by saying they were not strong enough to take the land because giants lived there. Even though two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, encouraged the people to trust the Lord who promised to give them the land, the congregation wouldn't listen. Instead, they cried all night and wanted to go back to Egypt.

The Present Problem of Wavering Faith

■ **James 1:6-7** "But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea,

driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord."

Faith is a gift from God that is built upon the sure foundation of a personal relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. However, for it to grow strong and become steadfast, we must cultivate and exercise it by focusing on the Lord and His provisions and promises. Otherwise, we will be tossed about by our feelings and circumstances or the opinions of others.

Causes of Wavering Faith

- **When trusting the Lord is in conflict with human reason.** Living by faith requires relying on God rather than our own analytical ability because what seems logical to us may be contrary to His will and purpose for our lives.
- **When we allow our feelings to overcome our faith.** The foundation of our faith is God's Word, which remains constant and unchanging. In contrast, emotions frequently fluctuate with circumstances and can lead us astray. No matter how we feel at the moment, we can always rely on what the Lord has said.
- **When we fail to see God at work in our circumstances.** We tend to perceive the Lord's hand working in our lives when our circumstances are good, but if difficulties, problems, or suffering come, we start to wonder where He is. Yet He has promised that He will never leave or forsake us (Deut. 31:6). When we don't understand what God is doing, we must remember that we live by faith, not by sight. He is always working in every situation for our good and His divine purposes. By keeping our eyes on God's Word and His faithfulness to us in past hardships, we gain a better understanding of our

difficult circumstances from His viewpoint, and our faith grows stronger.

- **When we listen to negative counsel.** People are quick to give us their opinions regarding what we should do, but their advice may not align with God's will. Any counsel we receive should come from godly people whose advice is in agreement with Scripture.
- **When we focus on our circumstances rather than on the Lord.** This is always a temptation for us because we live in the midst of situations that challenge our faith. However, instead of seeing them only from our perspective, we need to look at them in light of our sovereign God who loves us. Difficult circumstances are a part of His will for our lives and the means by which He strengthens our faith. Although we may feel disappointment because things are not working out as we hoped, in reality, these difficult situations are evidences of the Lord's love, care, and protection.
- **When we are ignorant of God's ways.** The Bible is the only place to learn about God's ways. Therefore, if we are ignorant of Scripture, we will have trouble trusting the Lord because we won't understand why He withholds our foolish desires or how He works in us through difficulties and hardships.
- **When feelings of guilt over past sins haunt us.** We may have wavering faith because we can't believe that God could possibly forgive us. This could be because we are still suffering the consequences of past sins or because we don't understand the sufficiency of Christ's payment for our sins on the cross.
- **When we listen to the lies of the devil.** Satan is a liar and an accuser who is always trying to trip us up with doubts about God's character and faithfulness to forgive sin.

Corrections for Wavering Faith

Ask yourself the following questions:

- **Where are these thoughts coming from?** Satan's goal is to instill doubts into our minds. When this happens, we should go directly to the Word of God to strengthen our faith in Him.

- **Did God not promise to meet all our needs?** He always answers our prayer requests when they fit His plan and purpose for our lives.
- **Did God not give us the Holy Spirit to enable us to do whatever He requires in life?** At the point of our salvation, the Spirit came to indwell us to guide and enable us to obey the Lord.
- **Is anything too hard for God?** The answer is no, but that does not mean He will remove all pain or want from our lives because He knows exactly what difficult situations are needed to make us into the person He wants us to be.
- **Is this one of the forks in the road in which my unbelief could cause me a lifetime of regret?** Since some wrong decisions carry long term consequences, we must always seek to walk in God's will. The Lord guides us by giving us direction, answering our prayers, and helping us along the way. But we must be willing to listen and obey Him on a daily basis. Therefore the most important thing we can do is to spend time meditating upon God's Word and talking to Him. The Scripture keeps us on track when everything else in our lives tempts us to distrust the Lord. But when our faith is linked to what He has said in His Word, it grows stronger.

► RESPONSE

- What situations cause your faith to waver? What role do your emotions or circumstances play in your outlook? Where is God in your thinking?
- Is your faith based on what you want God to do, or on what He has said in His Word?

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