

AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH: Luke 1: 45.

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Luke 1:26-45.

This is part of the narrative account of the birth of our Lord. At various times in the account that Luke gives us, the role of spiritual women is to the fore. Luke, we imagine, relied very much on Mary for many of the details in these chapters. There are also a number of prophecies which are given, there having been a prophetic silence in the life of Israel for over 400 years. Now there are messages from heaven, angels, and dreams which are leading up to the great event of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are two supernatural births that take place, that of our Lord and that of John the Baptist. The birth of John was exceptional in that he was born to an elderly woman. The birth of our Lord was exceptional in many ways, not least because He was born to a young virgin.

When Mary visits Elizabeth, the mother-to-be of John, Elizabeth's words to Mary are what seem to precede the words of Mary that we call the Magnificat. Elizabeth's words are words of prophecy. She pronounces blessings (v42) and speaks about the reward of faith (v45). So Mary stands before us as an example of faith for us to learn from.

1. We are to believe as we are told from the Lord

Faith involves believing what the Lord has told us. It is not will power or some mental energy we have to use to believe things despite the evidence against them. Faith in many ways is a calm and rational response to the things that we are told. It is a well informed response, as it was in the case of Mary. Her anxieties had been calmed (v29) and her questions had been answered (v34). She had been given detailed information so was not in the dark. Just as we would follow reasonable instructions by doing the things that we are given to do, so faith responds to the things that the Lord has shown us. Of course, what has been shown here is not just a piece of information of little importance but things which are of earth-shattering importance.

Mary's response in v38 is her acceptance of the things that she has been told about the way that she is to be the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. It shows that questions like 'Why me?' have been answered. She believes that what the Lord has said will be fulfilled and this is what Elizabeth speaks about in v45.

In the same way, we are to believe the Lord's account. The shepherds do in Luke 2:17. We believe it precisely because it is God's account. In doing this, we are doing it because

we believe that the Lord is worthy of being believed. It is the same with the Bible which we believe because it has depth, dignity, authority and insight. It is worth believing. Will we be like Mary and accept what it has to say? Or will we argue against it and miss the blessing of faith?

2. There will be a fulfillment.

Faith believes that whatever the Lord has said will have a fulfillment. Whether they are warning or promises, faith declares that those things will surely come to pass. The theme of fulfillment is an important part of the early chapters of Matthew's gospel. The thought that what the prophets said has come to pass with the birth and ministry of the Lord Jesus is present in Matthew 1:22; 2: 15, 17 & 23; 4:14).

One of the biggest subjects where we look for a fulfillment in line with what the Word of teaches, is with regard to the Second Coming of our Lord. We believe that the Lord has not lied about these events, including the Day of Judgment which our Lord's Return will bring to pass. We believe that the Lord has the power and the will to bring this Day to pass. We believe that we will be able to stand on that Day because of what the Lord has done on the cross for His people. Faith therefore looks forward to that Day (2 Peter 3:11-13) and is taken up with it (2 Timothy 4:8). We believe that in these present days we are passing through this world and moving towards this future event.

3. The blessedness of believing.

God is pleased with faith because it credits Him with being true and trustworthy. Faith does not declare in response to what has been revealed, 'That is impossible. I do not believe it. I cannot obey it'. Rather there is a reward for faith, a blessedness that follows.

For one thing, our prayers are heard and not hindered (James 1:6-8). If we question the Lord, we should not be surprised if we do not receive much in answer to our prayers. Faith brings us into communion with the Lord. The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him. The deeper our fellowship with Him, the more will be our rejoicing (Luke 1:46-49). With greater faith, we will see more clearly into the future and be confident in the outworking of the purposes of God, including the righting of injustice (Luke 1:51-53). Another of faith's rewards is that we will overcome the world. We will not believe the alternative belief system that the world puts up to oppose the Lord. Rather we will overcome it (1 John 5:4 and Revelation 14:12). Faith has power and gives strength to the will, enabling us not to believe or be attracted to the false promises, hopes and expectations of the world. Faith negates the negativity of the world.

Mary is an example to us of believing that what the Lord has said will come to pass. It did not exempt her from suffering but, through faith, we find the grace of God, just as she did.