

EAST CAMBRIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

"A first century church in the 21st century"

Bible Reading Plan

Week 11

- Numbers 26-29; *Luke 2*
- Num 30-33; Ps 35; *Lk 3*
- Num 34-36; *Lk 4*
- Deu 1-2; Ps 36; *Lk 5*
- Deuteronomy 4-5; *Lk 6*

Leading Services

Announcements: Mike V.

Morning:

Song Leader: Ron V.

Opening Prayer: Larry L.

Lord's Table: Zack V.

Asst By:

Closing Prayer: Richard L.

Evening:

Song Leader: Bill G.

Opening Prayer: Larry L.

Closing Prayer: Brock G.

Scripture Reading: Ben V.
(Matthew 7:13-28)

Sermons

AM: Big Ifs of Forgiveness
PM: Keys to Spiritual Success



Faith

"I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

The verse above is a powerful declaration of what a life of faith in Jesus Christ can accomplish. Faith is essential - one cannot please God without it (Hebrews 11:6). God's people walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), and by faith they overcome (conquer) the world (1 John 5:4). Consider some thoughts about a faith that overcomes from Philippians 4:13.

IT DOES NOT DOUBT - "I Can" faith gives "assurance ... conviction" in this life (Hebrews 11:1). Such is true because of its inseparable connection to God's revealed word; faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). There can be no genuine confidence in a vain religion guided by "I think so" or "I feel like ..."; human opinions/traditions and emotions are foundations of sand bringing spiritual destruction to lives built upon such (Matthew 7:24-27).

Continues on page 2

The faith that overcomes

In doubting God's word, they are "double minded" (James 1:6-8). In contrast, true confidence/boldness in Christ comes when we know we are obedient to divine truth - "in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18-22). An elderly gentleman once asked me, "How can we know that we are saved?" I attempted to teach him what the Bible says, that the only assurance we can have before God is when we obey his word of truth. Nothing can be matter of faith unless it is taught in the gospel (Romans 10:17). If folks understood this, including my brethren in Christ, they would not have to be begged to study their Bibles (2 Timothy 2:15).

IT WORKS - "Do". It is the actual doing of God's Word in one's life that characterizes a conquering faith. James warns of those who are deluded/deceived by being hearers only and not doers of God's word (James 1:22ff.). He continues by showing the "from daylight to dark" difference between a saving faith versus a "saying" faith (James 2:14ff.). A conquering faith works within the time God blesses us with on this earth (John 9:4), it works through love (Galatians 5:6), and it works by making/taking advantage of the opportunities before us (Galatians 6:10).

IT IS QUALIFIED - "All Things". Some may think it strange that I make this point when the scripture says "all things", but it is absurd to think this verse teaches when can do anything WE imagine or desire. This is not limiting an omnipotent God, but giving emphasis to the restrictive nature of God's revelation of truth. Only that which God reveals is for us and our children; the unrevealed "secret things" belong to God (Deuteronomy 29:29). The "all things" of which Paul writes must be qualified because we are warned not to go beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6). A conquering faith is about glorifying God, not ourselves.

IT IS IN CHRIST - "Through Him". Only in Christ can we overcome sin. Neither Mohammed, the Pope, religious synods and conference of men, flamboyant televangelists, cults nor any other man can provide what God's infinite wisdom through the cross gives for sinful man. Jesus will reign on his throne in his kingdom until his last enemy is defeated - death (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). In this same chapter Paul tells us this victory will occur when all mankind are resurrected from the dead (vs. 50-57). The assurance of man's victory over death is given in the fact of Jesus' empty tomb (cf. v. 20). Those who have presumptuously claimed what only belongs to Jesus Christ are still in their graves! Only Jesus conquered death by His resurrection, and only He gives us assurance that we too can conquer it through faith in Him (Acts 17:31). To overcome through Christ, we must first "put on Christ" by being baptized "into Christ" (Galatians 3:27), and "raised to walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Without Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5).

IT IS BY THE YIELDING OF OUR WILL TO DO GOD'S WILL - "Who Strengthens Me". A faith that overcomes becomes a reality only when we acknowledge our accomplishments in the kingdom isn't realized through our own strength but God's! (Philippians 2:12-13; Ephesians 1:19-20; 3:20-21). Such does not occur by a miraculous intervention. To the contrary, it is descriptive of a conquering faith began and guided by God's word revealed by the Holy Spirit. Of Paul's personal life, he said he "now lives by faith ... in the Son of God," and through his faith it is "no longer I that lives, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). Jesus, when facing death on the cross, prayed fervently to the Father in Gethsemane, concluding, "not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Our Lord, in his earthly life, exemplified one who surrendered His will to the Father's. Again, Paul was taught through his suffering to gain strength through surrender to God: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). The faith that overcomes the obstacles we face in life let's God have His way with us.

- Dan Richardson