

Thursday, January 28, 2016 – A Lifelong Faith

Faith can save us. Faith can help us through the tests of life. The expression, “The just [righteous] shall live by faith,” is a wonderful affirmation from the Holy Spirit of sacred revelation, filled with truth and comfort.

Church leaders have long been interested in why so many drift away from faithful service to the Lord.

Jesus summarized the matter in his parable of the sower. The causes he listed are: the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of wealth, distracted desires for worldly things, and carnal pleasure (Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:18; Luke 8:14).

This list could be expanded from numerous other texts (e.g., the ingestion of false teaching; Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 3:10), but for the moment this will suffice.

Matt. 13:18-23 - Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Many fall away and give up even the outward appearance of serving Christ. Many others never rise above the level of “a babe” in Christ. Many fall repeatedly to temptation and struggle year after year to overcome sin in their lives. Many become frustrated with failure as they try to make progress toward spiritual excellence.

Hebrews 6:11-12 – And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Christ’s promise is: “Be faithful until (unto) death, and I will give you the crown of life.” We must not only be saved from sin, we must stay saved — we must not only believe in Christ, we must “keep on believing.” Faith, like other important things, must be maintained — or it will be lost.

Revelation 3:11 – Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown

The life of faith begun is virtually worthless if it is not completed.

Col. 2:5 – For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

What happens to our faith is crucial. What, then, is involved in having a lifelong faith?

TRUST IN GOD

The more we learn of His infallible truthfulness, the more we trust God Himself.

2 Tim. 1:12 - For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

If we trust God, we will actually commit ourselves to Him.

1 Pet. 4:19 - Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

HOLD THE FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE

1 Tim. 1:19 - having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck...

The Christian must trust God implicitly, looking to him for help under all circumstances. We need to seek to know what is right, and then do what we know to be right.

How can we know what is right?

BE DILIGENT IN PREPARATION

1 Tim. 4:13-15 - Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

The Christian desires to study the whole Bible. We are to give all diligence that we may stand approved of God

2 Tim. 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

Paul instructs that he gave himself wholly to his study and work. He should be as well informed as possible in all things. Attend bible classes; attend all meetings of the saints.

I could scripturally show you a “legalistic case” why you need to attend Sunday school and all services, but the love a Christian has for God, the desire to grow closer to him through a study of his word and fellowship with his family here earth makes the decision easy.

GROW YOUR FAITH

Life experiences should mature our faith considerably, but in fact it may still be small .

Matt. 8:24-26 – And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us! We are perishing! But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"

It is possible for faith to grow significantly!

2 Thes. 1:3-5 – We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.

Desire for greater faith must characterize us. It is not easy in sudden crisis to develop a strong faith — we must prepare for the “big” tests of life by developing a faith that endures.

KEEP YOURSELVES PURE

1 Tim. 5:22 - Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

2 Tim. 2:22 – Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Be free from hasty and unjust actions. Exercise sound judgment. Do not allow self to be used in unethical schemes. Avoid youthful lusts. Avoid questionable places and conduct. Not only should we avoid evil, but also hate evil.

Some try to justify situations they put themselves in by saying they are trying to reach others. Only Satan wins when we allow ourselves to be drug into the gutter of sin.

1 Thess. 5:21-22 - Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

Rom. 12:9 - ... Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

FOLLOW AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS

1 Tim. 6:11-12 – But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

This command is in connection with the warning against love for money. Covetousness is idolatry (Eph. 5:5). The greedy Christian cannot please God. In order to be righteous -- a condition acceptable to God -- one must flee materialism.

HOLD THE PATTERN OF SOUND WORDS

2 Tim. 1:13 - Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Titus 2:7-8 - in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

We have to take the greatest care in stating truth in the language of the inspired writers. The teaching of Christ, as given by the Holy Spirit, must be upheld. The truth should be completely unmixed with the philosophies of men. Christians must seek to please God, not seek the applause of men. Throw aside things written by Lucado, Graham, Shelly and turn to the Holy Spirit inspired writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and others. These words are from God and what we will be judged by. Not men's words or philosophies.

2 Tim. 3:16-17 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

John 12:48-50 - He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me

a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.

OBEY GOD

Jesus asked, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Lk. 6:46). Belief and obedience cannot be separated. In some passages, the two are almost synonymous (John 3:36).

Faith without works is dead (Jas. 1:22-25; 2:14-26). Not works of the law or meritorious works, but obedience, works ordained by God (ex. John 6:28).

Not the hearers of the law are justified in God's sight, but the doers - Rom. 2:13.

Jesus Christ, "...having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Heb. 5:9).

Faith means taking God at His word!

Being faithful means doing those things which God has commanded.