

## LIVING by FAITH, Part 3

### *HOW to Grow in Jesus' faith residing in you*

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Don't miss this stirring and thought provoking conclusion to this series of *living* by godly faith. This session gives tangible points on *how* to grow in godly faith; how to overcome the devastation of doubt; and the joy and awe we experience when we really do start living by faith. Our prayer is for this message to inspire and encourage you to live a life of trust in your Maker as never before.

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***Good day everyone.*** This is the final session on Living by faith – and ***how*** we can GROW in faith. I often hear good sermons, but oftentimes the minister fails to say “how” to accomplish what he’s preaching. Remember you can order cassette tapes – or you can download directly from the internet too. You’ll get more out of these if you print the transcripts AND hear them audibly.

**Why 3 sessions on faith? Jesus obviously thought we may need faith at the end time (Luke 18:8); and frankly I’ve struggled** with my own doubts, fears, and lack of faith and had to focus on this topic to overcome all that. I’m sharing my own Bible studies, in essence. They’ve helped me immensely and I hope they will help you. I know I’ve grown in faith over the time I’ve done these.

I also believe Jesus *meant* what He said when He explained He was the first of the first fruit of God, and that *He* would *live in us* to the end of the age. We are the *rest* of the first fruit of God’s spiritual harvest (**James 1:18; Romans 8:23**). We can have Jesus’ very *own* faith now in us. **Galatians 2:20** says we now live by the faith of *Jesus* Himself! *In other words, get this: Jesus can do through you and me what He would be doing if He were here Himself – if we believe, if we let His faith flow, if we trust. If we get ourselves out of His way.* You need to really *grasp* what God is saying to you personally about this matter of faith.

Now add to that the fact Jesus said we would be able to do even *greater works* than He did (**John 14:12-14**). If Jesus could resurrect the dead, walk on water, multiply loaves and fish, calm a raging storm – so should WE be able to, since Jesus has not lost His miracle working power. But there was a caveat: ***“these signs shall follow those who believe”***, Jesus said (**Mark 16:17**). So if the signs and powerful works of faith *aren’t* happening, it must be *our* lack of faith, which Jesus even prophesied for the end time! There’s *no* reason in the world why Jesus’ promise should be fulfilled IF we believe. Peter and Paul resurrected the dead (Acts 9:39-40; 20:9-10). So could we, if we learn to *really* live by godly faith. Jesus said so. We’re the *rest* of the firstfruits. All the great works Jesus did was supposed to just be the beginning!! He’s the *author* of faith (Heb. 12:2), but we should be the ones CONTINUING these works of faith to bring glory to God and Christ. But even as I say this, think about it: ***Many of you hearing this are already doubting that what I just said will ever be something we would ever see as a mortal being! And that very doubt you have may be the very thing that will in fact make your doubt come true!***

Do you hear me? JESUS hasn’t lost His power. God’s *people* have! Once God calls us, we can be as close to God as we choose to be (**James 4:8**). If we’re not, it’s *our* fault, not God’s.

***If you've felt doubt over my last few words, hear this: You really need to study faith, pray about it, and hear these messages a couple of times until we get it. We're largely – though not entirely - - a generation of little or no real faith, just as Jesus said. I hope I have your attention.***

If nothing else, I hope these 3 sessions will get *you* really thinking about faith. Since the last session, I hope you're starting to *daily* pray for, *ask for*, more faith – as much as you pray for the healing of a loved one, or for a job, or for whatever else you pray for. We're supposed to be praying for more faith, more love, more wisdom, more knowledge of God's will, to be worthy of our calling – *those* kinds of things. As well as praising and thanking our great God and Savior.

**We've covered what faith *is*, *why* we need faith and now we've been covering HOW we grow in godly faith.**

**To have God's faith, we *must* have the Holy Spirit, as godly faith is a *fruit of God's spirit*.** We're assured we can have "the faith OF Jesus"-- otherwise it's merely human faith, what Jesus calls "YOUR faith". Godly faith comes from God indwelling us by His spirit, and a close *relationship* with the One we *love* with all our heart, so we *trust* Him with all our being! If we lack His faith, it's because we lack His spirit, or lack *love* and knowledge of Him.

Faith is surrendering to Jesus as Lord over our lives and believing and ***accepting Him as our Savior and Master, and submission to His will***, which we zealously seek. **Faith is walking with God**, starting and ending each day seeking His will, presence, guidance and approval. **Faith is seeking His word** to guide us and lead us. ***In my colloquial way of putting it, godly Faith also means sticking with God***, in good times and bad, no matter what!

**Once we have God's spirit, the other steps to growing in godly faith are:**

**Reword #1**

**\* 1- ADMIT your faith is low, and PRAY FOR more faith from our Father who wants more for us than we can ever imagine. Ask DAILY for more of GOD'S OWN faith, the faith OF Christ. While you're at it, ask daily for more love and wisdom and more of the holy spirit while you're at it. You have not, for you ask not.**

**So point one: we need to ASK for the FAITH OF JESUS and repent of our lack of trust and faith.**

**This starts the new material:**

**2. TO INCREASE GODLY FAITH, GROW IN YOUR LOVE FOR GOD and come to know Him - - and Jesus – INTIMATELY.**

*LOVE and faith go hand in hand dozens of times! Hear the message "10 Steps to Loving God".*

*You can't TRUST (have faith in) someone you don't know and love.*

*Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1-3, 14). Knowing Jesus, and knowing God our father, is knowing the WORD of God as well. Your faith in anyone you love grows the more you know that person. Faith is relationship-based.*

***The stronger your bond is with God and Jesus, the stronger God's own faith can abide in you. And the more you know God, the more faith you will have in God.***

*Please be turning to James 4:8.*

***How close you are to God is your choice, once He opens the door to Himself. (repeat)***  
**Do you want to come to know Him? Seek Him, first, often, and regularly.**

**James 4:8 NLT** “Draw close to God, and God *will* draw close to you...”

Other translations say “draw near”, or “get close to God and God will get close to you”.

**If you don’t feel close to God, it’s not God’s fault.**

***So how do we get close to God? How do we walk in agreement? How do we get to KNOW God? Ultimately, just like you get to know anyone: FOCUSING on the person, spending TIME with that person, BEING WITH the person a LOT, in a VARIETY of situations, LISTENING to him or her, learning how he/she thinks under a myriad circumstances. You have to make relationship-deposits!***

I realized recently that though my wife and I work together in our business, I hadn’t focused just on HER much recently. So I booked a weekend on the coast for her and me, and on the spur of the moment the other day called her up and asked her if she’d like to meet me to see a movie I know she wanted to see – and she jumped at it. It was kinda romantic, doing it on the fly like that. But that let her know I was obviously thinking of her.

Would God not enjoy the same thing? Touching base with Him frequently – dozens of times a day!?

Some feel that we pray in the morning and perhaps before going to bed, and that’s enough. I don’t think so! God is *in us* and with us all the time. In the closest of relationships, you don’t just think of your sweetheart or your wife here and there, but frequently throughout the day all the day long! ***One of my favorite verses is Acts 17:28 – “for in Him (GOD) we live, and move and have our being!”***

Think about it: our walk with God is about our *relationship* with God. Like all relationships, there are days we have more faith than others. Elijah had tremendous faith one day – to call down fire from heaven. The very next day, he feared Jezebel’s threat and sank into a deep depression.

**Romans 10:17** “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”

How can we *know* God unless we make a point to daily study His word? Hear the message on *daily manna* if you want help with that.

***God will reveal Himself by His word.*** Remember Samuel? There’s an interesting verse in ***1 Samuel 3:21*** about God and Samuel, and it’s there for *our* admonition: it says “...for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh **by** the word of the LORD.”

GET IT? Want God to be revealed to *you*? Want solid faith? Dig, dig deeply, into God’s word, and not just here and there, but *every single day!*

But what happens to US? **Satan gets us so busy** we don’t make time for God’s word, and I believe many of God’s people are not gathering their manna daily. In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:18-23, it speaks of one seed that I think speaks to us today: the seed among the thorns.

I'll read it in Matt 13:22 *"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. 23 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."*

**HOW does faith grow by hearing the word of God?**

- *FIRST, it is a portal into the mind of God. Since faith is based IN GOD, there's no better way to know the One in whom we're basing our faith.*

- *the more you hear something, the more you know it, and frankly – the easier it is to believe it.* And that's also the warning as to why it has to be truth. You could just as easily be believing a lie, if what you're hearing isn't sound doctrinally. Be sure to hear my message I'll have soon on how important *right doctrine* is.

- *God's word also gives numerous examples of "success stories" if you will, of those who did live by faith. The more of these we hear, the more likely we are to be willing to try the same path they took: walk by faith.* That's also why we are to teach these stories to our children, and speak often of faith, being surrounded by angels, how we're the temple of God, and so on.

*Let's not forget how JESUS fought Satan's temptations and fiery darts of doubt: remember?* It was with Scripture. You're all familiar with that, I'm sure. If not, go back and read Matthew 4. With every *doubt* fired by Satan – "IF you be the son of God...", Jesus countered with the sword of the word of God! Every time, Jesus answered with "IT IS WRITTEN...".

Brethren, when Satan is making you doubt, making you be tempted – are *you* ready with scripture to address *every* single issue? We *should* be! And *can* be if we're in the word of God daily.

Satan hasn't changed his M.O. He still shoots fiery darts at us. "If you were God's child, you'd be healed..." "If you were God's daughter, He'd take better care of you", like that. ***Deflect and fight Satan's doubts with God's word.*** God's word strengthens your *shield of faith* around you too, by which we *quench* the fiery darts of the wicked one. *God* is our shield. *His* word is our shield. And our sword. *His word* is our faith.

*I have a whole sermon on "10 steps to really loving God". I hope you'll grow with it.*

**3 FAITH is IN GOD AND HIS WORD -- NOT on an OUTCOME we want (Mark 11:22; Acts 20:21; Hebrews 6:1)**

*Just to make it very clear that faith is in God, not in our own abilities, contacts or anything else:*

**Mark 11:22** *"And Jesus said, 'have faith in God'".*

**Psalms 62:8** *"Trust in Him at all times, you people..."*

**John 14:1** *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me."*

Since **Hebrews 12:2** says Jesus is the author and finisher of faith, it makes sense to focus on *Him*.

*Other verses make it clear that faith should not be in an outcome but should be faith IN GOD. Some people have "faith in faith" – they have confidence in having faith, rather than confidence in the*

*source of that faith: Jesus Christ and Father. **Our faith is directly in who God is**, what God is – not just faith in His love, but faith in HIM! The Bible does not say to primarily have faith in His love – though we certainly can have faith in His love – but the primary focus is to have faith in Him. God is love, love is God – so in a way, maybe it's semantics, but I want to be focusing on His person, which produces His attributes.*

*Let's understand THIS: OUR faith is not just faith in a God per se – but faith in this God, faith in this **kind** of God we have, who is the one true God! The only living God. The only God of pure love and total holiness and perfection. In this God you and I can have faith!*

*Point #1 was to have the faith **OF** God in you, by the holy spirit, and by asking for more.*

*Point #2 was to grow in LOVE for God, for love and faith are inseparable.*

*Point #3 is to focus faith **IN** God and draw near to Him, as well as having the faith “of” God. Center your confidence in HIM, and not on a desired outcome as much.*

This was well illustrated when Jesus called **PETER** to come out and walk on the water to Him. Peter was *fine* as long as he kept His eyes steadfastly on Jesus. But when he took his eyes off Jesus and started seeing and thinking about the waves, and how deep the lake was, he began to *doubt*, to *fear*, and he began to sink. And we sink too, when we take our eyes off God and His word.

So KEEP THE FOCUS on the PERSON of God and Jesus. *Some of you hearing this will admit that you came into your Christian life – at least in the beginning – because you hoped, maybe even had faith in, an outcome: FAITH in a place of safety during the great tribulation. Or faith –belief—that you could be spared what lay ahead.*

*That is a falsely based faith. The faith must be in God, regardless of what He allows us to go thru. God's presence and providence in our lives must be clearly impressed in our belief systems, so we can have peace in no matter what is happening to us. . . for GOD is still there too.*

*Sometimes we start having “faith in faith” instead of faith in God. It goes like this: “I’ve gotta have faith, I’ve gotta have faith. If I just hope and be confident as I feel faith long enough, it will all work out OK”. That’s “faith in faith”. What we should have is faith in GOD, His very person, who and what He is and knowing and trusting Him so intimately that we’re at peace as long as we know we’re with Him. Without that one-ness, without that intimacy, there can be no real faith and no real peace.*

*That's probably **the greatest trial Jesus faced**: the experience He had never been through before of being cut off from His Holy Father when God had to put all the sins of the world that had ever been committed on Jesus' sinless head. So just as the High Priest, on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) confessed all the sins of Israel on the Azazel goat (Lev 16), Jesus for the first time in His life felt the horror of sin placed on Him and the horror of not being intimately in His Father, or at one with His Father, for that black afternoon on that cross when Abba had to turn His back on the Lamb of God, dying for us at that point. No wonder He screamed, “My GOD, My God, why have you forsaken ME?” You sense His absolute horror! And even at that moment, Jesus evidenced incredible faith, and was able to still say afterwards, “I have finished the work you gave me to do” and “Into your hands I commend my spirit” (John 19:30; Luke 23:46).*

So I prefer following scripture and having faith in *God* Himself even than in having faith in His attributes. Though it is implied here and there that we can have confidence in His power, in His love, and so forth – the faith should be aimed directly at the person of GOD Himself.

**WHAT AND WHO IS GOD TO YOU?** Distant, detached – or the EL SHADDAI, ALL POWERFUL, OMNIPOTENT GOD who also *loves* you and me more than we can ever describe, as a father/mother love their baby more than that baby can understand!? *As the CREATOR providentially in charge of everything going on... or absent when you need Him?*

**Your view of God, and the depth of your genuine relationship with Him, will directly determine your depth of faith.**

*Faith in God is faith in Him because we know Him, love Him, trust Him, no matter what, whether He decides to deliver us or decides to make us an example of what His children will be willing to go through IN FAITH.* Then we have confidence in whatever happens. That confidence we have in life now, is a direct result of having faith.

**Isaiah 26:3** again – “You will keep in perfect peace all *who trust in you*, whose thoughts are *fixed on YOU*.”

Over and over, King David exulted in the fact “the LORD is my ROCK, my fortress, my HIGH TOWER....”

**Psalms 16:8** “I have *set* the LORD always before me; *Because* He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.”

**Psalms 62:5-8** “My soul, wait silently for God alone, For *my expectation is from Him*.  
6 He *only* is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved.  
7 In *God* is my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, And my refuge, is in God.  
8 Trust in Him *at all times*, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.”

So whether or not we are taken to a place of safety, whether or *not* we are delivered from a hurricane, tornado or earthquake, whether or not we are healed of our cancer – *it shouldn't matter*. He who seeks to save His own life will lose it. A place of safety matters only if God puts you there. Godly faith stays strong – because its in God, trusting HIM, no matter *what* He makes us go through. *And in daily faith, this trusting of God shows itself in joyfully, willingly obeying from the heart, what ever He says* about all facets of life—including our finances, our marriage, our health, our relationships to everyone, our conduct, our vocabulary and ways we talk, ways we dress, ways we eat and live, *everything!* In the good times and the tough times. All the time.

**4) HOW to grow in faith: EXERCISE THE FAITH “MUSCLE” BY OBEYING what God says to do. FAITH AND OBEDIENCE are LINKED. FAITH GROWS AS WE OBEY AND SEE THE FRUITS OF OBEDIENCE.**

(Or, put it another way: DISobedience and UNBELIEF are often linked)

Hebrews 11 – the faith chapter – is full of this very point. Their faith was *proven* by the fact they *obeyed* God and did what God said to do.

**Hebrews 11:7-10** “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, **prepared an ark** for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became *heir of the righteousness which is according to faith*.

8 **By faith Abraham obeyed** when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

**Important: obedience is proof we believe** – at least enough to do what we’re told. *There’s a saying “you can tell what a person really believes by what he/she does”*. For example, you can say “family is very important to me”, but if you don’t invest time and effort into solid family relationships, your statement rings hollow.

*We can say we are a “believer” – but if we worry, we obviously don’t believe* we really can cast all our cares upon Him (1 Pet. 5:8). You can call yourself a believer only if we also obey as our intent, as our way of life, and that we show we absolutely trust God. That is what a believer is. Of course a believer is also someone who believes Jesus is their Savior and calls upon Him to BE their Savior.

**We grow in faith the more we obey God and see the results of obedience.** Obedience is the test of whether or not we trust God enough, so we do what He says. Put it another way: **obedience is proof of our faith**. When Noah started to build an ark, when it had never rained before, that obedience was proof of his faith. Another way of saying it: *we can’t claim to be faithful, to have faith when we meet God’s people at church services – and then live in sin or disobedience the rest of the week.*

**Hebrews 3:7-19** “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. 10 Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.’ 11 So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an *evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God*; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said:

“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

**16 For who, having heard, rebelled?** Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? ***Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?*** 18 And to whom did He swear that ***they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?*** 19 ***So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.***”

Do you see the connection between not obeying and unbelief? It’s right there, verses 18-19.

**On your own, please study on into Hebrews 4:1-12**, and the theme continues, but I think you get the point. If we know God, and then HEAR what He has to say, *trust* Him and then *obey* Him -- - as we obey, faith grows. Turn next to Matthew 7:24-27.

What do you know to do, but aren’t obeying? That will *destroy* your faith. Building faith comes from *hearing God’s word (Romans 10:17)* – and then *doing* what it says to do.

**Matthew 7:24-27** "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Obedience *to the word* is at the base of having faith that will withstand the storms of testing. Want to build faith? Then do what the Word of God SAYS!

We so often don't think of the **"great Commission"** correctly. It is not to teach all nations and baptize them and all that.... A crucial set of words is omitted when we do that. The great commission is that as we teach, we are to teach them to.... Well, let's read it:

**Matthew 28:18-20** "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them *to observe all things that* I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

What He said was to teach others *to do* the things I've commanded you to do. That means US. We've got to *obey* when we're told to be a loving husband, a father that won't discourage his children, or to be a wife who is submissive and respectful. When God's word says to obey the laws of the land – we obey God and obey the laws of the land. When it says to keep the sabbath day holy, we revere God and keep His holy time holy. That was never done away with in the New Testament!

Some things are relatively easy to do, if we get rid of pride – such as bathing 7x in the Jordan to be healed of leprosy – but *as* Naaman did it, he was healed. AS 10 lepers – **turn to Luke 17** -- begged Jesus for healing –what did Jesus tell them? "Go present yourselves to the priest".

**Luke 17:11-19** "Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him *ten men who were lepers*, who stood afar off. 13 And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 So when He saw them, He said to them, "**Go, show yourselves to the priests.**"

Now watch what happens. They're not healed yet. They'd have to believe before seeing any healing happening. Believing must start before we'll see answers generally, with rare exceptions. Remember the fig tree Jesus cursed. It wasn't dried up at once – but *by the next day* the disciples noticed it had dried up. It is there where Jesus said, believe you have *already received* your answer, not doubting – and you'll receive it. – **Mark 11:20-24** )

Let's continue in Luke 17: 14 –"**And so it was *that as they went*, [i.e., as they obeyed what Jesus said to do, even before they saw any healing] they were *cleansed*.**"

It hasn't changed. We'll see miracles and answers and *results of faith*, when we OBEY, *as we obey*.

**Now verse 15:** And *ONE* of them, when he *saw* that he was *healed*, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.



17 So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? 18 Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. ***Your faith has made you well.***"

Just an aside here, that it could be that this thankful Samaritan got MORE than the others. They were all healed of their leprosy, but it says of the Samaritan, in the Greek, **that he was made "whole"**, or the word can even be translated "saved". It's most often translated as "saved" in fact, or "made whole". You can be healed – in other words, the leprosy removed – but being made WHOLE means any lost limbs would be restored, *plus* it could include emotional and spiritual wholeness as well! When I pray for healing, I pray not just for *healing*, but for *being made whole*! That the psychological damage, the spiritual damage, any physical damage be restored to *wellness*, wholeness. Just an aside... no charge for this extra. Just teasing.

Other examples are tougher: When Jehoshaphat approached God about the Ammonites surrounding Jerusalem, God said He would take care of it, but wanted them to *do* something: *go outside the safety of the city walls and meet them*. That would be tougher.

**2 Chronicles 20:12-24 we'll break into the end of Jehoshaphat's prayer – but you read it from verse 1, that way you get the whole picture:**

12 O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."

13 Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the LORD.

14 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. 15 And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. 16 **Tomorrow go down against them.** They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. 17 You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you."

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. 19 Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high.

20 So they **rose early in the morning** and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: ***Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.***" 21 And when he had consulted with the people, ***he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD,***

***For His mercy endures forever.***"

**22 Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir**, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. 23 For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one

another. 24 So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; ***and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped.***"

We *must* be showing a *new life*, as God comes *into* us via the holy spirit:

***What areas are you resisting – in terms of completely surrendering to the full obedience of your Master and Husband? Is it because you don't believe it will work as scriptures say? Is it because you're afraid and don't trust Jesus can save you and make things work out?*** Verses about praying for your enemy, or forgiving him/her? Remember JOB? In Job 42:10 says "The LORD restored Job's losses *when he prayed for his friends...*". Read "enemies".

Loving your wife as Christ loves the Church – serving, providing for emotionally and spiritually? Or helping your husband be successful and submitting yourself to him, seeking his leadership? How about all the verses about debt, taxes, tithing, handling finances? Or the verses about health, and being the temple of the holy spirit? Or the teachings on gossip, lusting, envy, . . . and on and on. Let's start obeying God through the way He's teaching us by His word.

**I'll say this: it is precisely in those areas we're not obeying fully where God has drawn a big bulls eye!** God has to draw our attention to those very areas of our lives where we have not yet fully surrendered control to Him, and given full obedience to Him. It won't be pleasant. He has to BREAK US of our self-will, of our stubbornness, in those areas. That breaking process is coming, if you don't surrender fully to Him. God has had to spank ME over and over in areas I just seemed to not want to give up to Him. But it was in His love He did it. For my good. For my eternal life.

Decide now where **you** are not surrendering. I advise you to surrender those areas. It may be a meanness or unkind lifestyle. It may be not honoring God in His sabbath properly. It could be your marriage, your finances, your child rearing... what?

Want to grow in faith? ***Find out what God says to do – and now go do it. Obey.***

**No sermon on faith can be complete without reading James 2.** It ties in faith and *action* – works – together, very well.

**James 2:14-26** "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not *give* them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 *Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

[Modern application: we say "I'll pray for you, you're in my thoughts, I hope things work out, we'll be thinking of you"... and on and on. Frankly he's saying what Paul so often said – *faith has to be proven by demonstrable love. Love and faith working together again. To care if fine, but doing something is better!*]

18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." ***Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*** 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe -- and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ***22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?*** 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God,

and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

***26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."***

**Story of having to go to the Feast of Tabernacles around 1994** or so - - and was in a straight commission sales job and had not earned any good sales lately. Here we were going away for 10 more days, and though I had plenty of money for the Feast itself, knew if I didn't have any sales before leaving, that I would come back broke, since we were paid 2 weeks after we made the sale. I had been working on a major restaurant chain of 17 stores, and these larger sales usually took many months. I had started it a few days before having to leave for the feast. After praying very, very hard about it, I ....rest of story. Had to process the paperwork so there was a check after the Feast.

### DOING OUR PART VS JUST SITTING STILL

Does having faith mean we do nothing in a dangerous situation? Much debate centers on this question. I personally feel we take actions as we can, when we can, and as we do, rely also on God to lead us to know which actions to take and to bless the ones we are – in faith—taking.

Examples:

\* Jesus hid himself or got away from crowds that were intent on killing Him, when it was not yet the right time for Him to die.

\* Paul did allow himself to be let down by a basket over the city walls when he learned of a plot to assassinate him. If your life is in danger, yes – do what you can to get out of danger – *as* you pray! He also allowed the armed escort of 200 cavalymen and foot soldiers to accompany him when he had learned of the plot.

- JOSEPH did save up food in the 7 years of plenty. God could have provided manna or something, but they did what they could. *DO YOU have a savings plan for the time of trouble?* Or do you have the blind faith that says God will provide whether we have been prudent or not? Proverbs 6 says to go to the ant – who saves up for the rainy days.
- Nehemiah knew God could protect them, but what did he do? He had them repair the walls. And *as* they worked, he made sure they had a sword with them.

**5) SURRENDER to GOD'S PROVIDENCE OVER YOUR LIFE and faith WILL grow. ACCEPT God's will for you; seek to understand and know it – and LET GOD control your life. Seek what GOD wants in your life – and do it. Your faith will grow.**

There have been some great sermons on God's providence – meaning His plan for you, and providing for you even when you don't know how or when. By that I mean, we begin to grasp more deeply **that God is intimately involved in our lives**, and probably has been from the foundation of the world. Before we were *born*, God had each of us in mind. Your every detail. **You are special** to God, very, very unique and God has a specific *purpose* for you to accomplish now and in eternity.

IF we can believe this is true, we'll have a LOT more faith that nothing can or will happen to us without God's total awareness – and ability to make everything work out for good in the end.

When we *really* understand this, we'll have more faith. And *peace*. When we perfectly learn this – and I'm still learning it – we should be able to even face death and not be too upset since we understand real *life* is not about *this* life!

If you *doubt* this concept, go back and listen to my 3 messages on Christ and the church. If God personally hand-built the wife of the first Adam, would He do anything less for the wife of the “2<sup>nd</sup> Adam”, the Christ? Would He have left *anything* to chance? Just read **Psalm 139**, all 24 verses, but especially **Ps 139:13-18** if you have any doubts about that.

Godly **Faith is surrendering control** of our lives to God's providence and oversight, and implicitly trusting in Him and His love so much, that we have peace – when practiced perfectly – no matter what is happening around us, after we have surrendered our fears to God. *Faith is confidence, trust, belief in our Savior and our God, even when we don't see the final answer, or an answer is delayed* – perhaps even all the way to the resurrection.

***Surrendering to God's providence also means we understand that our lives are not about US.*** Nothing on earth is about us. Everything is God's, belongs to God and exists for HIS purpose, HIS glory, and HIS pleasure. OUR existence, and what we go through is also for HIS purpose, and to bring HIM glory. **Romans 11:36** says “everything exists by His power and is intended for his glory. To him be glory evermore. Amen.”

**Rev 4:11 NLT**: “You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created.”

You and I, and everything ever created or born, everything is here for HIS pleasure, HIS purpose. We need to submit to that. This does not contradict what I said about “persistent faith”, of being willing to discuss passionately how you feel about things with God. **Jesus did**. God's own Son did, to the point where He sweat blood! But in the end, He was at peace with what He had to do – and by the time the mob arrived in Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, BY that time you find a Jesus at total peace with what was happening. But PRIOR to that moment, He was very passionate about His concerns, thoughts, and questions – all the while admitting and reminding Himself that it was FATHER'S will that counted in the end.

And you probably know the memory verse **1 Corinthians 10:31** “...***whatever you do, do all to the glory of God***”. **Not for your glory**. Not for my glory. It's not that my child is an honor student in school that grabs my attention – but that my child bring *glory to his father in heaven!* Now *that* pleases me even much more.

There are literally dozens of examples **of this kind of vision that sees the GRAND DESIGN God has for the earth**, for you, for humanity. We are *part of something much, much bigger* than the moment we're in at the moment! But that *moment* we're in, pleasant or unpleasant, *does* have a role it is playing in the grand scheme of things. We've *got* to believe that, or we'll never quite exercise faith or experience the *peace* that is beyond description that comes with godly faith!

**Please turn next to Genesis 50. (summarize only on tape... quickly discuss Joseph, Esther and Job. Urge listeners to get full story on transcript).**

There's the story in Genesis (ch 37, 39-45) of the way **Joseph** was horribly treated by his brothers. They sold him into slavery because of their jealousy. At first God seemed with him but then when Joseph proves himself virtuous, and refuses easy sex with his master's wife who was really hitting on him – it SEEMS like God let him down. It *seems*, I said. He was jailed, because of her false accusations and he basically rots in jail for several years before God bails him out. Read the story for yourself. At the *end* of the story, how does *Joseph* see all of this? His brothers are afraid that Joseph will get revenge on them, now that Jacob their father has died (Gen 50:15-18) Let's pick up at Genesis 50:19.

**Genesis 50:19-21 NLT** “But Joseph told them, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, to judge and punish you? 20 *As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people.* 21 No, don't be afraid. Indeed, I myself will take care of you and your families." And he spoke very kindly to them, reassuring them.”

WOW! He *understood* that it's not what happens TO us, but what happens IN us, and if we are faithful, God can and will use us for *good* in the end.

IN a RELATED way – **there's a country song that says “THANK GOD FOR UNANSWERED PRAYERS”**. Sometimes we pray for a specific answer and don't *get* our answer – because sometimes God is either testing us, or sometimes He has something very DIFFERENT, probably even *better*, in mind for us.

Now let's focus on the last chapter of the book of JOB, ch 42. Who brought all the trouble on Job? Who caused it? Why did it happen? Job 42:11 discusses “***all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him....***”

\*\*\* **When my SON David died**, and one minister wrote “time and chance happen to all”. I reacted violently against that notion being expressed to me, a believer. I could NOT accept that my son died accidentally. That God turned His head for a moment and was caught off guard. Oops. Even God got caught off guard? Not on your life! My son died for very important reasons that *transcend* His own life. AS I speak this, in mid December 2004, we're coming to the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of our son's death. It is very much on my mind. But I know David's REDEEMER LIVES, and will STAND on this earth and call David from the grave where we placed him. And we will hold our baby yet again!

How can we be *upset*, even if there's cancer, or death, or accidents, or loss of jobs, or slander – IF, big huge IF, we can remember God sees all, knows all, is aware of all – and may have even *caused all for our good*.

**6)HOW FAITH GROWS: HANG OUT WITH BELIEVERS – NOT WITH DOUBTERS.**

THE POWER OF FAITH – WHETHER POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE

**Another VERY important concept about faith** that we must cover in this message too – as it will permeate everything you’ll ever know about faith – is that **there is *positive* faith, and there is *negative* faith. *Either kind of FAITH works.*** Faith is another word for *belief*. So people with faith are called “*believers*”, in this case meaning “believer in God”. However for reasons I don’t fully understand – I don’t understand the mechanics of it -- whatever we *believe*, good or bad, *happens* a lot of times.

Even in the world, it’s long been believed, that whatever you believe becomes your truth. What you believe seems to *happen* for you. I think it was Henry Ford who said something like: “whether you believe you can, or whether you believe you can’t, you’re right”.

So it’s technically NOT a matter of having faith or not having faith when we think of someone who “doesn’t believe”. . We tend to say someone who doesn’t believe has “NO” faith, *but I’m going to call it “negative faith” – because a doubter has FAITH ALSO – NEGATIVE FAITH. He believes something CAN’T or WON’T happen, and so his very strong faith (negative belief) brings it to pass, as surely as someone’s positive faith can cause a healing to happen.*

In **Matthew 14:22-33**, we can read the well known story of Jesus walking on the water towards His disciples who were in a boat on a rough lake. They think they’re seeing a spirit or ghost, then recognize Jesus, who invites Peter to join Him. You know what happened. At first, *keeping his eyes on Jesus*, Peter is able to walk on the water too! But then his belief SHIFTS from belief he could do it, by God’s power, to belief the waves and wind are stronger – and he DOUBTS. In everyday lingo, he *believes* he will drown! Now notice what I’m saying:

While he believed he could walk on water, he did. As soon as his belief *and focus* changed, to a belief he could drown, he did begin to sink and drown. His belief – both times – worked perfectly. Jesus asked Him in **Matt. 14:31**, “**why did you doubt?**” **He doubted he could continue to walk on water, and his doubt – negative faith – worked! He sank! JUST AS HE BELIEVED.**

***Jesus is asking you and asking me the very same question! WHY ARE WE DOUBTING!?***

***FAITH – positive or negative – WORKS.*** This concept of even “negative faith” working, is not often heard, though it IS discussed under the terminology of “doubt”. Do you worry? We all do, of course we do. But “worry” is just another word for negative faith. *Believing the worst* – another way of saying “to WORRY” – in many cases CAUSES the very thing we are afraid of happening, to happen! How? Partly because it often precludes God from blessing us with a great answer, and partly because what we fear often comes upon **us (Job 3:25)**. But IF, IN the fear we have, we come to GOD, *with the fears in hand*, as David did, Hezekiah did, and others did, God strengthens us, assures us, and *delivers* US from our fears, *if and when* we acknowledge the fears and give them to God. (Psalms 34:4)

So *remaining* in fear will keep powerful things from happening, but *presenting* the fear to God results in deliverance *if* we then *leave the problem* in HIS capable hands! (**I Pet 5:7**).

***Be turning to Mark 6 for another example. Can you think of a time when even JESUS was unable to heal as many as He would have, and could have?*** God works within His laws. One of His laws is the power OF FAITH – whether it is powerful good faith or powerful DISbelief.

**Mark 6:3-6** In Nazareth, where they KNEW Jesus as the carpenter:

3 "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him.

4 But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house." 5 Now ***He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.*** 6 And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching."

Can you start to see why it says in **Romans 14:23** that "***whatever is not of FAITH is SIN***"? God detests it when we don't believe Him. Worry, doubt, being all upset when bad things are happening to good people, is a *slap* in God's face at worse, and at best is very immature understanding of God. Disbelief **LIMITS GOD by His own will and laws**. Disbelief keeps many good things away, though there are a few cases where God worked miracles in spite of their unbelief

I'll just recount one more quick story – with full story in the transcript: **Mark 5:23-43**, write that down in your notes. The resurrection of Jairus daughter. Summary: Jairus' daughter had died

Jesus had been asked earlier to heal Jairus' daughter who was ill

**Mark 5:35-43** "While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

**36** As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, ***He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."*** 37 And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. [why? Perhaps he wanted only resolute faith around Him?] 38 Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. 39 When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." [God calls our death a temporary "sleep", knowing we'll be resurrected. He said the same of Lazarus and others]

40 And they *ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside*, [WHY? BECAUSE they were ridiculing His belief and had no faith – and this could have prevented the miracle, as we saw in the passage about Nazareth.] He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. [And don't forget, Jesus had already told Jairus in verse 36, "Do NOT be afraid, **ONLY believe.**"]

41 Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." [The parallel account in **Luke 8:55** says "her spirit returned"]

42 Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. 43 But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat."

**NOW ASK YOURSELF:** ***where have YOU been doubting lately? And WHY have you been doubting? What awesome miracles have you and I prevented from happening because of our doubting?*** And taking it a step further – in learning from the story of Jesus putting the doubters out of the house – how many miracles *others* could have experienced, never happened, because of your and my doubts? Scary, eh?

How many miracles could we have been a part of, if we hadn't let *others'* doubts poison us? It's the same principle of letting the cowardly and fearful *get out* of the army! Cowards *infect fear*

into the army and need to be put OUT! The *fearful* INFECT GOD'S army too, and won't be allowed into the Kingdom if they don't repent of it and overcome it!

**7) ACCEPT JOYOUSLY THE TESTING AND TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH, that it's genuineness and strength is refined as pure gold.**

God's faith in us *will not blossom*, unless we let it be *tested* in the crucible of fiery trials. It's part of the process. It's something we need to *expect* and understand is *required*. ***God is going to spend eternity with us – and needs to know now that we will always be faithful, no matter what. So He has to test our loyalty, our love, our faith, our trust – and He tests it by putting us into very rough circumstances from time to time. He tests it by seeming to be distant at times.***

***Just as we must have faith in God, GOD MUST KNOW that He can also TRUST US! That can be certain only if that trust is tested. And that's why so many "bad" things happen to "good" people. God is testing us, to see if we'll stick with him no matter what.***

**James 1:2-3** "My brethren, *count it all joy* when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the *testing of your faith produces* patience." The suffering is testing our faith and making us stronger.

**1 Peter 1:6-9** "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by *various trials*, 7 *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory* at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 *receiving the end of your faith -- the salvation of your souls.*"

***2 Corinthians 4:17-18 says our "light affliction" is working an eternal weight of glory. Here's how a modern translation puts it:***

*"For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever! 18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever." NLT*

My wife and I have had trials with work, jobs, finances, our first son died, then we lost 2 miscarriages. We've been in two car accidents that totaled the cars and could have killed us, and on and on. But we've been through a lot less than many we know. I was told I could have 3 months to live – and feared terribly *at first*, but when I surrendered that to God, and *accepted* His will, the condition mysteriously disappeared. There have been many other serious trials, even involving church.

My point is: I know we're stronger today for all of these things. I know God was with me then, and will be with me again as we no doubt will go through ever stronger trials.

We see that Abraham himself grew tremendously over his lifetime – from a man who feared at times, lied about his wife, may have been afraid of consequences of his victory over the 4 kings – to finally a *triumphant* father of the faithful.

It can happen to you and me too. In fact, it *must* happen for you and me.



\*\*\*\***LET'S WRAP UP WITH THAT.... MUCH MORE CAN be said, but it's gone on too long already.**

Jesus asked in Luke 18:8 if He'd find faith on the earth when He returns.

***The GOOD NEWS IS – that we're told in the last book, in a prophecy, that in the very end time, there WILL be people of faith.***

**Revelation 14:12** says : “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God ***and the faith of Jesus.***” WILL YOU – will I – be among those who, in the end time, keep God's commandments and have the faith of Jesus?

You've heard about how *many are called, but few are chosen*? Well, to be with Jesus when He returns to the earth, there's a 3<sup>rd</sup> vital dimension. Please turn with me to **Rev. 17**. There it describes a union of 10 kings who will unite powerful armies to *fight* Jesus and the saints returning from the heavenly wedding. Notice how the ones with Jesus are described:

**Revelation 17:14** “These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; *and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.*”

“**faithful**” - -the Greek word here is “PISTOS”, almost identical to Greek word, *pistis* – that Jesus used in Luke 18:8 when he asked if He'd find his people had faith when He returns. Well, those who return WITH Him, will have PISTIS, FAITH, faithfulness. Will trust Him, and be trustworthy also.

***As some have said: we can read the end of the story. And the story ends positively. Yes, there will be faithful people at the end. You can be among them***

*Do you want to be with Jesus when He returns to the earth? Rev 17:14 says you have to be among the **called**, among the ELECT – THE **chosen** – and, very important: among the **faithful**. Those full of faith in God. Those who *believe* Him, and prove that believe by a life of obedience and seeking His will in everything they do.*

***Brethren – if even a few of us*** will heed these 3 messages and ask for more faith, repent for not focusing on God, repent of our doubting and our self – reliance and our worrying.... And start loving God more, spending more time with Him, getting to know and trust Him more -- *look out!* For *indeed*, I think you and I will start to see God's hand *open for us* as never before!

I can hardly wait. *will you join me* – in walking with God *by his faith!*? You can be among those who come back with Jesus – the called, the chosen, the faithful – if you apply the points in this sermon and keep looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. Have a great day brethren, --and go live this day and each day – in living faith.

