

The Measure Of His Church

Walking In His Image! Ephesians 4:11-16

Theme: Growing Into The Fullness Of Christ

Lesson 3: Measuring Our Faith

Text: 2Corinthians 5:6-7

Introduction

1. A penetrating and convicting question: If we removed every reference to faith, would it really make any difference in the way we live our lives?
2. This question reminds me of what happened to the apostles in **Acts 12:1-2**.
3. This is the kind of faith that Paul discussed when he wrote to New Testament Christians and commended them for their faith in the midst of intense persecution.

I. Faith Is Foundational

A. In determining the degree to which a group of believers measure up to the stature of the fullness of Christ, faith is foundational. Why?

1. First, faith is a part of that great trilogy – Faith, Hope and Love **1Cor.13:13**
2. Second, faith is always mentioned first when these three concepts appear together. **1Thessalonians 1:3; 2Thess.1:3; Colossians 1:3-4; Ephesians 1:15-16**
3. Third, faith is not just personal and individual. Paul wrote to local church bodies.

II. Three Dimensions of Faith; How Faith Is Used in The New Testament

A. It Brings Us To Salvation

1. Paul, in the book of Romans, develops a logical argument for “**the faith**” to bring sinners to Christ. (Rom.1:5, 17; 3:22-26, 28-30; 4:5, 9; (Gen.22:18) 15:6; Rom.4:11, 12, 13, 22-25; 5:1; 16:26)
2. Is it true what preachers say on T.V. – that one is saved by “faith only”? To answer this question, turn to Acts 16:26-34 for the answer. How many different kinds of faith are there in the New Testament?

* Weak faith – Rom.14:1

* Wavering faith – James 1:6,7

* Faith without love – 1Cor.13:2

* A faith that will confess–John 12:42

* Trembling faith – James 2:19

* Dead faith – James 2:26

* Faith without works – James 2:24

* Faith that has not turned to God – Acts 11:21

* Those who have power to become – Rom.1:12

* Faith that doesn't do the will of the Lord–Matt 7:21

* Faith that only calls: “Lord, Lord” – Luke 6:29

* Faith without root – Luke 8:13

B. It Is A Body Of Truth

1. The phrase “the faith” refers to a system of doctrines and teaches under the New Covenant.
 - a. Believers in the Lord were taught “the faith”.
 - b. see **Acts 6:7**
2. If someone were to ask you, “What is your faith” or “To what faith do you belong?” What are they referring to?
3. How many faiths were in existence at the time of the apostles? **Eph.4:1-6, 11-16**

C. A Growing Christian Experience

1. What should a sinner experience when they “respond” **by faith** and then “**to the faith**” and begin their Christ-like walk? _____
2. They then begin to live out their faith.
3. see **James 2:17**

III. The Thessalonian Example

- A. Faith that produces good works in Christians, is seen in four ways. see **James 2:14-18**
1. **Visible** _____
 2. **Consequential** _____
 3. **Discernable** _____
 4. **Measurable** _____
- B. Paul helps to show the wonderful example the brethren in Thessalonica, how their faith measurably increased.
1. **1Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2Thessalonians 1:3-4**
 2. Why was Paul so concerned about the brethren he left behind in Thessalonica?
 3. see **Acts 17:5-10**
 4. Timothy's report – **1Thessalonians 3:6-7**
- C. What were some of the visible and measurable aspects of their growing faith?
1. They had not returned to their idolatrous and immoral lifestyles. **1Thess.1:8-10**
 2. They reflected their growing faith by continuing to save Jesus Christ in spite of persecution. **1Thess.3:6-8**
 3. They reflected their "growing faith" with their generous and unselfish attitude toward their material possessions. **2Cor.8:1-4**
- D. What is the source of our faith and how do we get faith?
1. Is it rooted in some kind of "positive thinking" that is based on humanistic teaching?
 2. Because we're made in the image of God, are we capable of developing a strong sense of self-confidence, enabling us to achieve great things?
 3. What is the ultimate source of biblical faith?
 - a. see **Romans 10:14-17; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2Timothy 3:16-17**
 - b. **Ephesians 3:14-17**

Conclusion

1. Paul's prayer in Eph. 3:14-21 teaches us several things about having a "living faith".
 - a. First, we should pray for ourselves and for all of the people in the church for a stronger measure of faith. (vs.20)
 - b. Second, we should pray that Christ can be seen in our lives day by day, so we can accomplish the very things He asked us to do. vs.17
 - c. Third, we should pray for the kind of faith that will help us defeat Satan. Ephesians 6:16
 - d. Fourth, we must remember that biblical faith is not blind faith. It is based on reality and the true testimony of numerous eye witnesses plus thousands of documents that were written by men who lived with Jesus Christ continually for three and a half years.
2. The beginning of this lesson refers to Brother Everett Huffard and his family of Jordan believers who lived in the midst of Islamic persecution.
 - a. Brother Everett, his family and believers should be a constant reminder to those who know the true mark of spiritual strength and maturity.
 - b. They demonstrated that as Christians "**we walk by faith, not by sight**" 2Cor. 5:7
3. Back to the original question in the beginning of this lesson: If we removed every reference to faith in the Bible, would it really make any difference in the way we manifest faith as a corporate body of believers?
4. Many of us in this class have many years ahead of us, Lord willing. God has given us many more opportunities to measure our faith – right now – in the present. How would you describe your faith, right now?