



HOW'S YOUR FAITH? 1 Thessalonians 2:17 - 1 Thessalonians 3 -

¹⁷ But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. ¹⁸ Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us. ¹⁹ For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

1 Thessalonians 3

***3** Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, ² and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, ³ that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. ⁴ For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.*

Encouraged by Timothy

⁶ But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you— ⁷ therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. ⁸ For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

⁹ For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, ¹⁰ night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

Prayer for the Church

¹¹ Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. ¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Let us pray.

So in review, let's think about this letter Paul has sent to the little church in Thessalonika. In the first chapter, Paul let them know how much he missed them. Larry, Kelton, and I spoke on the

podcast about how much we've missed our little congregation. Paul felt exactly the same way. He had gone to Thessalonika and shared the gospel and a little congregation had started.

In chapter one last week, we took the key passage, *"⁶And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. ⁸For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.*

We talked about how each of us who chooses to follow the Lord, must allow God to remove idols from our lives. Idols are anything that come between us and God. This little group of church members had heard the gospel, responded in belief, and now they became good examples throughout all of what is now known as Greece. I have heard similar testimonies concerning this little church in the grove.

On Wednesday, we spoke about 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, and we talked about how we as believers must live lives that are worthy of God. Each of us has a ministry. All of us has ministry that starts with those close to us. Your ministry begins with the will of God which doesn't have to be a great mystery. It starts with love. Love is giving. Micah the prophet gives us the starter when he says, "He has shown you oh man/woman what is good and what does the Lord require of you, but to do right by God and others (do justice), love mercy in which you're not out to just give people what they deserve, but what they need. And, be the kind of person that walks humbly with God. Do the will of God and don't brag about it!

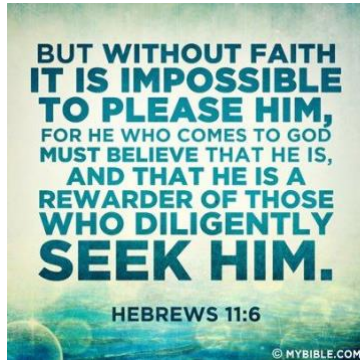
Included in each of our ministries, are the attributes of being like a mother and a father to those to whom we minister. Paul speaks directly to this in chapter 2. Larry and I talked about how there is nothing quite like the comfort that comes from a mother. We are each called to extend that kind of comfort to those unto whom we minister. Paul said that he also ministered to them as a father; a father who corrects and directs. So in each of our ministries, we will do some comforting, some directing, and some correction. I talked about how folks love me to check up on them when they miss church/services etc. However, if I begin to exhort and correct them about obedience to the word of God, and the commands to attend services, they're not quite so ready to receive the correction and direction. We're really supposed to give both.

Let's begin now in chapter 3 at verse 17 where we left off on Wednesday's podcast. We will then go into chapter 3. This is a section which some bible teachers call "Timothy's report". Paul Tells the little church in verse 17 that his heart is still with them, but he's been removed from them physically for a season. He longs to be with them to strengthen them in the most important thing of all....THEIR FAITH!

Faith plays such an important part in our Christian walk. Paul makes many references to his congregation's faith as he speaks to them in this passage. I have underlined these so you can easily see them. Paul had sent Timothy to "find out about their faith." That's what really mattered to Paul. He didn't write to learn if people were giving. He didn't write to figure out if

the church parking lot had been redone. He didn't write to see if the fiber optic cable had been installed. He didn't even write asking about how many people were showing up. He says, "I sent Timothy to find out about your faith." It is through faith that we as believers receive the quickening power of God!

In verse 6, he says, "Timothy has brought us good news about your faith." Then in verse 7, he says, "We're encouraged because of your faith." Again and again Paul is delighted that their faith is doing well. So the question for each of us today is "HOW IS YOUR FAITH?"



So let me ask you this morning. How is your faith? Is it growing? Is it steady? Is it in decline? Faith of His followers is the thing that most surprised Jesus. This is the only thing that scripture shows us that amazes God. We know that without faith it is impossible to please God. To come to God, we must believe that He is, and we must believe that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. What does that mean? He rewards those who truly seek Him with all of their heart, soul, and mind.

Remember the centurion that came to Jesus asking that his Jewish servant be healed. You can find the story in Matthew chapter 8. Jesus was amazed at this man's faith. The centurion sent word back telling them that Jesus didn't even need to come... just give the word and my servant will be healed." ¹⁰ *When Jesus heard this, **he was amazed** and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." (Romans 8:10 NIV) It takes a lot to amaze God. Jesus said, "I have not heard such faith in Israel."*

And, a lack of faith also affected those who walked in unbelief. Remember the instance when Jesus went back to His home town, and the people were saying, "Isn't this just Joseph and Mary's oldest son. Isn't He the son of a carpenter?" They took offense at Him. The scriptures tell us that Jesus could only do a few miracles there because of their lack of faith.

And so here in the passage today, we see Paul giving emphasis to faith. Why is this so important? It is because FAITH IS THE BEDROCK OF HOW YOU AND I WILL LIVE OUR LIVES. It is the key to whether we are living the abundant life or not. It will affect whether you have a living hope and a life that is enriched by the powerful presence of God or whether you will have a dry empty powerless life. The barometer that measures the spiritual fullness of a person's life is the amount of faith that they have. Scripture tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. When you come to services, and you hear the word of God, your faith will grow and the quality of your Christian walk and your life will become stronger.

BEWARE

OF AN EVIL,
UNBELIEVING



THAT FALLS AWAY FROM THE LIVING GOD.

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When things get sideways in our lives and it shakes us to the core, it does so because of unbelief. We are tossed on the waves when we stop believing that God is who He says He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Would you rather be around people who believe that things can become better? I'd rather be married to a person who believes that GOD CAN CHANGE THINGS. God is able to change things even when I am not able to do so. When a person sees everything around them through the eyes of unbelief,

there is no solution. Unbelief always focuses on the problem and faith always focuses its eyes on God! God is not daunted by your circumstances. Is your heart filled with unbelief, or are you believing in the possibilities that God has for you? I would rather surround myself with people that believe that God is able than to be around people who are always dwelling on the problem. I've seen it throughout this whole pandemic. There are Christians who believe in possibilities and others who are riddled with disbelief. Guys, God has this under control!

Remember what we studied about the Jews being stuck in Kadesh Barnea for 38 years. God had intended for the people to leave Egypt, and walk in 13 days to the promised land. They had received the law at Sinai and then they sent spies into the land to check it all out. A bad report was brought back except by Joshua and Caleb. They saw possibilities. The naysayers saw problems. But what happened?

Most of the people saw the problem as being too big. They said, "There are giants in the land." They spread that report among the people, and the people despaired. Doubt prevailed and God sent them back into the wilderness for 38 more years.

²⁷ Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan."

³⁰ Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

*³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." ³² And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. ³³ There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and **we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.**"*



(Numbers 33) Doesn't scripture tell us clearly that "we walk by faith and not by sight." DO IT! Start walking by faith and not by sight.

So, how do you see yourself? Are you stuck back in Kadesh Barnea, or are you moving on into the promised land that God has promised you. Those who saw themselves as grasshoppers had no faith in the power of God or in His promises. They put their faith in their own human abilities. As I said, so much of the outcome of our lives depends on the condition of our faith. I don't want to wander in the desert, do you? All unbelief can see is the problem. It is unbelief that brings

negativism. It is a sin to have unbelief. We need to get our eyes off of our problems and onto the solution....which is the Lord.

Unbelief will always fail you. Remember Peter walking on the water? It was his unbelief that caused him to sink. He took his eyes off of Jesus and put his faith in his own knowledge of the wind and the waves and the danger of the water. Disbelief always focuses on the problem instead of faith which focuses on the solution. YES, we do go through difficult times, but unbelief will not get you through the problems. Faith will get you through the storm.

So you might be asking me, "Pastor Faber, how can I increase my faith?" Well, I'll tell you. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17) . Listen to God's promises:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Heb 11:1)

And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith. (Matt 21:22)

That your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor 2:5)

For nothing will be impossible with God. (Luke 1:37)

***Trust in the Lord with all your heart,** and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Prov 3:5-6)*

For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor 5:7)

The righteous shall live by faith. (Hab 2:4)

Faith doesn't cause you to deny your reality. Faith causes you to confront your reality and give it to God. Some Christians think that it is some sort of confession of illness to admit you are sick. That is wrong teaching. Faith is learning to turn your reality over to God. Turn it over to Him today. Turn the brokenness of your health to Him. Turn over the confusion of your mind to Him. Turn over the brokenness of your marriage to Him. Turn over your singleness to Him.

Turn over your doubts and fears to Him today. He wants you to be whole. Jesus said, "According to your faith, it will be done."

Remember when we studied the parable of the persistent widow. She kept going over and over to the judge asking for justice. ⁶ *And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. **However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"***

Will we trust in ourselves, our abilities, the world, etc? Or, will we trust in God. Paul knew the preeminent importance of faith, and THAT is what he wanted to bring in its fullness to the little church in Thessalonika. LET US PRAY.