

Sunday Morning Message

October 22, 2017

Faith Examined

Text for Today's Message – James 1:1 – 8; 1 Peter 1:1 - 9

Congregational Reading – Hebrews James 1:2 - 6

Introduction

For the last two weeks, we have been studying from the Scripture the subject of faith. Faith is very important, because we cannot please God without it; we cannot be saved, except through faith in Son of God. We cannot do the will of God from the heart, if we do not have and increase our faith in the Lord.

The purpose of this sub-series of messages is to help us not only to see and understand what faith is by definition, but also to determine whether or not we have experienced "saving faith"; Another reason that we want to study this subject is to encourage all of us to walk by faith in this life to a greater extent; to draw closer to God by faith, and to accomplish greater things for the Lord through an increased level of faith.

We have already explained what faith is:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

We have also looked at examples of faith from Hebrews 11, "the great hall of faith".

Today, we are going to put our faith on trial. We are going to examine our faith – give it an examination. This examination will prove whether or not we have faith, and it will also determine the strength of our faith.

Read James 1:2 – 4; 1 Peter 1:6 - 7 again

(Explain the difference between testing (or trials), and temptation)

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. (Jam 1:12-14)

God does not tempt you to do evil In fact, He will not let Satan or anybody else tempt you or even test you above your ability to be victorious.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1Corinthians 10:13)

Three Thoughts Regarding the Examination of our Faith through Trials:

I Trials Prove Your Faith

Illustrate – the Lord Jesus was tested by the devil

A To Yourself

"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10)

B To Others

II Trials Purify Your Faith

Trials are the very thing used of God to make us more like Him.

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (James 1:3-4)

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (1Peter 1:6-7)

Illustration - The Fire reveals the impurities in the gold

But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. (Job 23:10)

III Trials Prepare You for Greater Levels of Faith

David was tested by the lion and bear, which prepared him for the test of Goliath, which prepared him for the test of King Saul, which prepared him for the Kingdom.

Illustration - Testing

A blacksmith known for his strong faith, had a great deal of illness. He was challenged by an unbeliever to explain why his God would let him suffer.

He explained, "I take a piece of iron, put it into the fire to bring it to a white heat, then I strike it once or twice to see if it will take temper. I plunge it into water to change the temperature, put it into the fire again, then I put it on the anvil and make a useful article out of it.

"If it will not take temper when I first strike it on the anvil, I throw it into the scrap heap and sell it for a half-penny per pound. I believe God has been testing me to see if I will take temper. I have tried to bear it as patiently as I could, and my daily prayer has been, 'Lord, put me into the fire if you will; put me into the water if you think I need it; do anything you please, O Lord, only do not throw me on the scrap heap.'"

Illustration - Shaped for Glory

During the Great Depression, a good man lost his job, exhausted his savings and forfeited his home. His grief was multiplied by the sudden death of his precious wife. The only thing he had left was his faith-and it was weakening.

One day he was combing the neighborhood looking for work. He stopped to watch some men who were doing the stonework on a church building. One of these men was skillfully chiseling a triangular piece of rock. Not seeing a spot where it would fit, he asked, "Where are you going to put that?" The man pointed toward the top of the building and said, "See that little opening up near the spire? That is where it goes. I am shaping it down here so it will fit in up there."

Some of you are going through terrible, troublesome times. You may be experiencing some heartbreak sorrow. Or perhaps you are enduring some painful physical illness. Or it may be something else-maybe even too excruciating to talk to anyone about. The blows of the hammer and chisel hurt.

But hold on to your faith. These difficulties will not get you down. They are only temporary. Glory is coming. It is the harsh blows to the outward man that often bring the greatest strength to the inner man.

Keep praying. Keep believing. The Master has to do some shaping of us down here so we will fit in up there.

Conclusion

You claim to have faith.

That faith can be seen through your works.

That faith will be proven to be genuine through the trials that God allows or even causes in your life. Who instigated the great series of testing that Job went through? God did. "Hast thou considered my servant Job?"

These trials will prove your faith to yourself and to others. When others see your faith shining through the trial, God is glorified.

These trials will also purify your faith. They will reveal what needs to be purged. (Gold illustration)

These trials will prepare you for the next level. That is why the Bible says to “greatly rejoice”, and “count it all joy”.

Your decisions in the trial will determine what God will do with you. Recognize that when faced with a trial, your reaction to the trial in some way determines how God will use you in the future. Allow the trial to prove you, purify you, and prepare you. Don’t let it to make you bitter; for if bitterness takes root in your life, you are placed on a shelf of uselessness for the kingdom of God.

Illustration - Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Thomas Andrew Dorsey was a jazz musician from Atlanta. In the twenties he gained a certain amount of notoriety as the composer of jazz tunes with suggestive lyrics, but he gave all that up in 1926 to concentrate exclusively on spiritual music. "Peace in the Valley" is one of his best-known songs, but there is a story behind his most famous song that deserves to be told.

In 1932, the times were hard for Dorsey. Just trying to survive the depression years as a working musician meant tough sledding. On top of that, his music was not accepted by many people. Some said it was much too worldly-the devil's music, they called it. Many years later Dorsey could laugh about it. He said, "I got kicked out of some of the best churches in the land." But the real kick in the teeth came one night in St. Louis when he received a telegram informing him that his pregnant wife had died suddenly.

Dorsey was so filled with grief that his faith was shaken to the roots, but instead of wallowing in self-pity, he turned to the discipline he knew best-music. In the midst of agony, he wrote the following lyrics:

Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand.
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light;
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.

If you live long enough, you will experience heartache, disappointment, and sheer helplessness. The Lord is our most precious resource in those hours of trauma. "The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9). Tom Dorsey understood that. His song was originally written as a way of coping with his personal pain, but even today it continues to bless thousands of others when they pass through times of hardship.