

Our Faith in Present Times

TEXT: “ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; **Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.**” (Jam. 1:1-3)

THESIS: Faith can be difficult enough that it lowers our self esteem, makes it hard to trust others, or decays our faith in God. Yet, we must continue to trust because of the love and compassion for God, ourselves, and others.

INTRODUCTION:

1. James knew all too well that having faith is difficult.
 - a. We continually have inward and outward trials from people in the church and out of the church.
 - b. This brings sorrow upon us, yet having faith produces greatness even when others may cause us to stumble.
 - i. But, while we are tried or pressured, our faith continues to work patience which in turns allows our faith to work and grow deeper.
 - ii. This is all by our faith in God and our love for him, ourselves and each other.
2. Furthermore, there are those in this world who may strengthen our faith and we may consider them our friends or perhaps husbands and wives may help in strengthening us.
 - a. However, there are still those who disturb us and shake our faith in ourselves, in others and in our faith in God.
 - b. Therefore, we are to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thess. 5:21), and “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering”; (Heb. 10:23), so our faith remains strong despite what others may say.
3. We are to let our lights shine in a world of darkness which brings all kinds of people around us.
 - a. But, when there are those around us who attempt to bring us down, we must continue to keep our heads high and weed out those who take courage from us and weaken us, but this does not mean that we give up on mankind and neglect the faith we have in others.
 - b. Nevertheless, it is usually best if we keep those who are like minded around us so we have people to confide in when we are faced with discouraging situations.
4. We must be careful and trust people who will allow us to:
 - a. Keep faith in ourselves
 - b. Continue to have faith in others
 - c. Does not deter our faith in God and his word

DISCUSSION:

- I. KEEP FAITH IN OURSELVES
 - A. Faith in self can be difficult to maintain because while there are those who tell us

that we are great, others may say that we are no good to them and pick on us for the way we dress, what we say, how we act or what we do.

1. When things like this happen, we begin to lose faith in ourselves and our talents become hidden.
 2. This lowers our self esteem which can cause depression, sadness, and other problems.
- B. One such man that we can read about in the Bible is the man of one talent.
1. He needed faith in himself because he said, “and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast that is thine.” (Matt. 25:25)
 2. He had taken his good talent that the Lord gave him and dug a hole for his talent and buried his talent in the earth. (Matt. 25:18)
 3. This is similar when one has a talent given by God, yet he is influenced in other ways where he hides his talent from many people and buries it under himself not letting anyone know what his talent is because of fear or shame.
- C. There are many who are being spiritually defeated because of a lack of faith in themselves.
1. It can be discouraging to be a Christian, but that does not mean that we take our Christianity (our talent) and hide it so no one can see it.
 2. “Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.” (Matt. 5:14)
 3. Jesus knows that we can hide our lights.
 - a. He says do not think about what others think of you, but choose the option or talent to “let your light so shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16)
 - b. This is a plea to stand and not to hide our Christian lights in a world of darkness even when it becomes difficult to use the talent that God gave each and every one of us to use for his cause!
- D. Success or faith in self does not come in boxes, or bottles, but in cans.
1. Only failure comes in can'ts
 2. Therefore learn to say, I can.
- E. Build up faith in yourself for you, your friends, your family, for the world, and for God.
1. Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil. 4:13)
 2. Yet, we need to be like Paul and have faith in ourselves even when we are discouraged or knocked down.
 3. We should not hide our Christianity from the world nor should we hide our talents at home or in a bushel, instead show the world who you are and what you stand for.
 4. Show the world that you have something to contribute because Christians stand next to Christ and “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to

every creature” (Mk. 16:15) attempting to connect with people and demonstrate what one talent can do when we put the power of God in front of us!

II. WE ARE TO CONTINUE TO HAVE FAITH IN OTHERS

- A. Sometimes it can be difficult or frustrating to have faith in someone else.
 1. Often we never know what another person will do.
 2. However, if we show our talent and faith in ourselves to others, then we will also draw like-minded individuals to ourselves so we are able to see faith in others.
- B. Paul indicated his faith in others, especially for Timothy.
 1. “For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state.” (Phil. 2:20)
 2. Paul and Timothy had a special bond between each other because they were very similar.
 - a. Paul said, “Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:” (1 Thess. 3:1-2)
 - b. Again on a different occasion, Paul noted, “So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.” (Acts 19:22)
 3. Paul put his confidence in Timothy and Timothy likewise put his faith in Paul and desired to be like him.
 - a. They worked together on many levels, and Paul knew that Timothy did not seek personal gain, yet showed his faithfulness to God in his actions which Paul admired.
- C. Faith in others is important because it keeps us from becoming soured on the world.
 1. This can be seen in the relationship between husband and wife.
 - a. Two separate individuals, yet both give trust to one another.
 - b. In addition, fellowship with Christians can be another example.
 - (1) “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)
 - (2) Christians, friends or family can have many difficulties in life.
 - (a) They often need someone to confide in for comfort, support, and encouragement.
 - (b) It is by our emotions and our needs that we put our faith in other people.
 2. Therefore, it is important that we never give up on others.

- a. Having faith in others is a privilege of friendship, allowing ourselves to be comfortable with others.
 - b. This gives us a big heart, but unfortunately the bigger our hearts grow, the more they become burdened by abuse from others, yet we must continue to have faith in those who will not inflict such harm upon us.
3. Imagine if Christ had given up on the whole world or the apostles because there were some that he could not trust. If he was to turn his back on the whole world because of this, then what hope would there possibly be for sinners or for us today who put our faith in him?
- a. Many people may have hurt us in the past and made it difficult to give our trust to others, but we must continue to give of ourselves just as Christ did and put our trust in God, in ourselves and in others so people will see our goodness and follow after Christ putting their trust in him, in themselves, and be in fellowship with others that are like minded.
 - b. The world can be a lonely place if we refuse to have fellowship and trust in others because it will eventually lead to the isolation of ourselves, spouses, friends, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and eventually...God.

III. DO NOT DETER YOUR FAITH IN GOD AND HIS WORD

- A. If we can see past other people's faults that have failed us in the past and begin to put our faith in others, we will easily be able to put our faith in God.
1. Faith plays a big role in the life of a Christian because we may not always understand why God commands us to do certain things.
 2. In 2 Kings 5:9-14, Naaman once came to see Elisha because of his leprosy. Elisha told him to go and wash in the Jordan 7 times and he would be cleaned of this disease of the skin. Yet, Naaman did not have faith in Elisha nor God and went away mad and frustrated. He did not understand how something so meaningless to him could have any effect, yet we see that Naaman needed to have faith in God. Furthermore, because of his little faith, he whined in rage like a child because he did not want to go and wash in the dirty waters of Jordan, but thought the clean rivers: Abana and Pharpar of Damascus would be better. However, when Naaman put his faith in God and put his faith in Elisha and did what they told him to do, his leprosy was removed and his flesh was made clean again.
- B. When it comes to God, we are to have faith in him and his commands even though we may not realize why he chose these specific commands which are to be followed even if, to some, another way may seem better.
1. He commanded all men everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30)
 2. He has commanded to be baptized every one of us for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; 10:48)

3. He has commanded that we not forsake the assembling of ourselves together for worship. (Heb. 10:25)
 4. Furthermore, he has commanded us to work for him even if no one else is able or around to see it because we are to work on our own salvation with fear and trembling. (Phil. 2:12)
- C. Now because we have faith in God and are faithful to his words, we can also put our faith in the promises which he has told us.
1. He said that he will give those who have faith in him and are obedient to his word, the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38)
 2. He has promised that his words are not empty words, but it will please him and shall give prosper to wherever he sends it. (Isa. 55:11)
 3. Furthermore, he has promised that we do not need to be worried about physical supplies that we need if we seek him first. (Matt. 6:33)
 4. He has promised that those who love God, all things work together for good. (Rom. 8:28)
 5. He has promised to those who have faith in God that one day, we will be resurrected and forever be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:16)

CONCLUSION:

1. Faith can be difficult at times.
 - a. Faith in the system of faith, faith in ourselves, and faith in each other are important.
 - b. It is necessary to have faith because through faith we are able to see the good in other things and to know that God's will be done!
2. People may kick us when were down, they may abuse us mentally or discourage us in several different ways, yet we must never hide who we are.
 - a. We are to be Christians and to let our lights shine in the whole world which will draw all kinds of people to Christ so we are able to teach them about God, his word, his will, and his salvation that he will give to anyone who follows faithfully so one day we can drink of the waters of life freely (Rev. 22:17).
 - b. May we continue to trust others which brings fellowship in our lives with those who are like minded such as we.
3. Paul had faith in Timothy, Naaman showed faith in Elisha, Christian fellowship in faith with other Christians, and above all we should have faith in ourselves and in God who gave us the blessings of faith, hope, and love.
 - a. There are billions in the world today.
 - b. God cares for them and he cares for each of us, therefore we should show others how much we care for them.
4. Faith and love go hand in hand with each other.
 - a. A long time ago, there was a man who once endeared great faith in another. One day, this man became sick and was dying. His friend who heard of his sickness while doing work for his Father, came to the aid of his sick friend. Unfortunately, by the time he arrived, his friend had died. The young man was truly saddened as

his heart broke while he wept for his friend. He missed him. He loved him and he went to see where he was buried. Once he arrived to the place where his friend was buried, he spoke to him. The man that he spoke to was Lazarus and his friend was Jesus Christ.

- b. What a friend we can have in Jesus if we would only put our faith in him and those who are like minded while on the glorious yet burdened road of faith.