

SENT: Faith In God and His Word

Scripture Reading: Acts 27:13-26

Prayer: Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. (Psalm 119:89) Help us believe this. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Intro:

Do you ever have moments in your life where how small your faith in God is comes into the light? You know what I mean, right? Those moments where you realize how unnecessarily fearful you are about a test result or about possible outcomes in a situation. Or those moments when you instead of stopping to pray or ask God for help, you just operated out of the flesh, totally independent from God.

[Story of doubting if we could reach our We Believe goal in one weekend] - "I know God can, but will He, really?"

These things happen in my life far more often than I wish they did. But I want to grow. I truly want to be a man that operates on faith. When we do not operate and live with bold, courageous faith in our lives, we miss out on seeing the very real evidence of God's presence and hand on our lives. The reason why so many in our world, including us in churches, miss out on these things is that we do not HEAR and ACT upon God's Word.

There is a direct correlation between our having rock solid faith in God AND trusting His Word (what He says).

****Context of Acts 27**** Paul is sailing for Rome and they are experiencing terrible conditions. Paul even warns in vs 9-10 that much loss, from cargo to human lives, was likely. They were in seriously bad shape. A tempestuous wind comes and the ship is being manhandled by the weather. They start jettisoning cargo. They went days with no sun or stars. All hope of being saved was abandoned. They all figured "we're going to die." They were without food. But then Paul stood among the men and begin to speak. **READ Acts 27:23-24.** Then he says...

vs 25 **"So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told."**

Paul has faith in God. And he has faith that God is going to do exactly what He said. Paul is on a boat that is being tossed back and forth on a raging sea. It has been happening for days. They are out of food. The cargo has been dumped overboard. God tells Paul that the boat will crash, however, nobody will lose their lives if they stay on the boat until it crashes. Everyone will survive. God has given Paul everyone on the boat. Listen, everything around Paul screams "save yourself!" Everything around Paul says, "You're toast!!" Everything around Paul says, "All is lost, all is hopeless!" But Paul believes God. Paul has faith in what God has said.

God's Word is reliable because God is reliable. Faith in God = Trusting His Word. To have faith in God is to trust what He says. We cannot claim to have faith in God if we do not trust His Word.

Like anyone, the basis for whether or not we trust their word, is whether or not we trust their character. Who is saying something will determine if we believe it or not. Can we trust what God says to us, 100%? Well, let's look at who God is. Scripture teaches that He is all-knowing, which means He knows everything there is to know. He has all knowledge. He knows every possibility and contingencies in the universe. All knowing. He is all-wise, meaning, He not knows everything, He knows what is best. He knows what is best for us, for our flourishing, for our growth, etc. He is good, and loving, which means everything He says comes from His love for us. That is both what He grants and gives us, and it includes what He forbids and takes away. So when you look at just those character traits of God, He knows everything, He's wise, He's good and loving, throw in for good measure that He cannot lie, then what He says should be heeded as true, wise, loving, and good. Everything He says. So if we trust God's character, we will bank on God's Word.

Do you trust and obey God's Word even when your circumstances and everything around you says not to?

Faith in God's Word grounds you when the ground beneath you is giving way. Notice Paul tells them to "take heart." Be of good courage, God is going to do what He said He would.

Scriptural examples of people believing God's Word though they had circumstantial reason for doubting:

- Noah believed God's Word to build an arc, despite no rain and the jeers of others (and it rained *7 days later*, Noah/his family spared)
- Abraham believed God that Sarah would have a child (and she did)
- Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead if he were to sacrifice him (God spared Isaac)
- Moses believed God when he spoke before Pharaoh (and God judged Egypt and delivered His people)
- David believed God had anointed him king, yet when he could have killed Saul, he didn't, he let God be his vindicator (God made him king)

There is a direct correlation between our faith in God and our trust in what He has said.

Matthew 7 - hearing the word and acting on it. Jesus paints the picture of someone who hears God's Word and acts on it, lives on, builds their life around it, is like someone who builds their house on rock foundation. It can stand when waves and storms come crashing. But the person who hears, but does not do them, is like one who builds their house on the sand and cannot stand when the storms come. **It is not just hearing or believing the word, but acting upon it.**

Matthew 8 - the faith of the centurion is celebrated because of belief in the power of and submission to God's Word. He knows the authority of Jesus' word and believes Jesus only need speak the words of healing and it will be. He is hearing and acting upon it. And Jesus remarks he has not seen a faith like that in all of Israel.

Matthew 9 - the faith of the friends who brought the paralytic is mentioned (*when he saw their faith*), the woman who bled for years acts on faith (*let it be done to you according to your faith*).

We must act on faith in God's Word because it displays our trust in God. You cannot separate God from His Word.

What about you today? Are you living by faith in God? Are you demonstrating your faith by trusting what He has said, by obeying it? I don't know what the "boat" in your life is, but as you stand in it and observe the chaos surrounding you, the people who doubt you, the circumstances that seem to suggest otherwise, are you standing with faith in God? Are you trusting what He has said about what your facing?

Examples of hearing the word and acting on it, the faith required: (all examples & Scriptures in the manuscript)

- Letting God vindicate you and bring justice, you forgiving those who hurt you

Ephesians 4:31-32 — 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Ecclesiastes 3:16-17 — 16 Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. 17 I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.

- Giving

In Matthew 6, after talking about money and giving, challenging people they can't serve God and money, where their money is is where their heart will be...what does Jesus anticipate? The "yeah, buts..." He anticipates people asking about how they'll be fed and clothed, etc. So he teaches about trusting in the One who feeds the birds of the air, clothes the lilies of the field, and we are of more valuable than they are. Do we trust His Word about this in such a way that we then act by faith?

Malachi 4:8-10 — 8 Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing

me, the whole nation of you. 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

- Anxiousness and Worry

In the last example of Jesus' teaching about the birds and lilies, he is commanding us not to worry or be anxious. He points us to the provision and care of God. Paul echoes this too.

Philippians 4:6-7 — 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:15 — 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Some of you are forfeiting the peace that Christ offers us. It is real. It is as real as the anxiety you battle. Let that sink in. It is as real as your anxiety. So we need to come to the Lord and trust His Word. He has promised peace, not anxiousness, so let's cast aside our need to control things and begin trusting Him. Let's trust him until we see anxiety fading and peace coming.

- Mourning tragedies and trials with hope instead of hopelessness

In this life, there can be brutal trials to endure. Don't let the reality of hurt and pain in your life convince you God has turned His back on you. When you read the pages of Scripture you see the lives of people who suffered loss, pain, rejection, and sorrow. Imagine Mary's heart as it broke watching her beaten and battered son hanging there from the cross gasping for air. Imagine Job as he lost his entire family, wife and children and all. Imagine Joseph when your brothers betray and sell you, the loneliness and rejection. Imagine David as he loses his newborn baby, his grief oozes off the pages of Scriptures. The people of Scripture can relate to our suffering. Perhaps more than all, Jesus relates to our suffering. He was rejected. He was betrayed. He was denied. He was mocked. He was alone. He was beaten. He was killed. He experienced every single experience of human emotion that we have. He emphasizes with us. He warns in this world we will have trouble, but tells us to "take heart, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Romans 8:18 — 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 — But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

Psalms 46:1 — God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

- Praying to God in all things, believing His Word that He will answer

One of the ways we can demonstrate faith in God is by trusting His Word about prayer. We are told to "pray about everything." We are told to ask for anything. Yet, we do not often pray this

way. We pray faithless prayers, often doubting God can do anything about it or doubting He cares about our trivial things. (Story of praying for Kaleigh's reading)

John 14:13-14 — 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

- Confessing sin to another believer or two so you can grow in holiness

This is hard to do for many because we like to keep our "I have my life under control" face on. But the reality is, we all have sin and we all need grace and accountability. Do we have faith in God to such a degree, that we believe His word when He tells us to confess our sins to one another?

James 5:16 — 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer — "This is why the apostle James urges us to call the elders of the church to pray, as well as to confess our sins to one another. Through confession, we can unlock the bars that keep us bound up inside. Then we find true and lasting healing. But for this to happen, we must be ready for Christ to change us. Perhaps this is why we resist confessing anything to anybody. For to admit our wrongdoings to another person would mean we are ready to change the way we are and live."

I cannot possibly name every scenario, but I pray the ones I have mentioned show you how you need to approach yours. If you don't know what God has said about what your facing, you need to find out. If you don't know what Scriptures can help you work through your circumstances, you need to find them, reach out to someone, because you need to hear what God says so you can stand by faith. In your GC's this week, I encourage you to truly open us about where your faith in God is and trust in His Word is through the scenarios you are facing in your life. That's how we grow together. If you are not in a GC, I invite you to begin Growth Track this weekend, or jump in next weekend, we need so desperately to connect with others on this faith journey. They help us deepen our faith in God and to trust/obey His Word.

Close:

Our **Gospel Response Time** today needs to be a time of praying. Lets take time today to call upon the Lord. We need our faith strengthened. Like the man who was asked if he believed the Lord could heal his son, he said, "I believe, help my unbelief." We need the Lord to help our unbelief today. We need to pray that our worldliness would take a back-seat to our faith in God. We need to ask God to help us cling to His Word. His word is truth. We can cling to it and stand on it, that is what builds our faith.

So what are you dealing with today? What circumstances in your life are crippling you with fear, anxiousness, doubt, and robbing you from experiencing a closer communion with the Lord and experiencing the power of His activity in your life? Lets be like Paul, who has faith in God and that it will be as He has said.

PRAYER