

**Spiritual Disciplines: Faith**

Lesson 17: Wednesday, January 26, 2021

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**TEACHING NOTES**

*The spiritual disciplines are practices we find in Holy Scripture that honor God in our doing and promote spiritual growth in the gospel of Jesus Christ among believers.*

*They are practices or habits that Christians prioritize because it aids us to cling more to Christ and grow in Christlikeness.*

**1 Timothy 4:7** …discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (NASB)

**Disciplines are practices**. Spiritual disciplines are things you do.

Tonight’s Spiritual Discipline is a big one. An essential one. And one that can all too often be overlooked or just assumed as happening. But both our better understanding and attentiveness to the practice of this spiritual discipline is really at the very core of all that we do in and unto the Lord!!!

Let’s jump right in tonight by answer the core question…

**1. What is faith?**

I think faith is often a very misunderstood thing.

One insight into this reality is Webster's Dictionary has seventeen definitions of the word, **faith**.

There are so many definitions and so many ideas of what faith is that it can become difficult to have clarity and conversation about saving faith or what true Christian faith really is. Our goal as committed Christians is not to have a blended or confused idea of what faith is but a biblical one and so thankfully, God’s word gives us the needed clarity to cut through the cloudiness and get to the core of the matter.

Turn with me to Hebrews 11.

**Hebrews 11:1**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Right away, we are given here a twofold definition of faith.

**faith is (1) the assurance of things hoped for, (2) the conviction of things not seen.**

Let’s start with the second.

1. **Faith Is: The conviction of things not seen**

So listen to this clearly: **What is Faith?** **Faith is a “conviction” of things not seen.**

It is a true and real trust in what you can’t see or touch. **Faith is, true trust in that which is out of sight.** This means, if you can see it, then it doesn’t require faith.

To better understand this part of our definition the author gives us an illustration in verse 3:

**Hebrews 11:3**By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

**Faith understands that creation** (what is seen) **was made out of what is not seen** (The creator, God). Faith is what “sees” what is not “seen” and it is convicted or convinced by it!

**Understand that the conviction is the key.**

It is especially important because scripture tells us that all of mankind sees the evidence of the creator in the seeing his creation but many are not convicted by it.

**Romans 1:20** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

We all look at the same evidence, but some are moved by God’s grace and through the gift of faith to have conviction and some are not.

Faith is taking a hold of God (who cannot be seen) because you see the evidence of his fingerprints in what you can see and you are convicted it is Him who is behind it all.

So what this means is: **Faith is NOT blind.**

**In other words, It is not a baseless or wreckless wish or optimism.**

Saving faith is not just a leap at something you really hope to be true.

This kind of thinking almost falls into a notion of, “I will believe it into existence” or “I will fake it until I make it.” Or “I will work really hard to make this become my reality.”

Please understand, This is not true faith. It is religion at best but far short of saving faith.

So when we are trusting in God, walking by faith, in a hard situation, let’s say it is a very uncertain situation, and you are truly trusting God’s perfect will and outcome. That is not some kind of blind haphazard, throw it to the wind notion.

Have you ever heard someone say to you in moments like this, “you have more faith then I do”?

In some way what they mean to say is, ***“you are willing to blindly trust what is not trustworthy”.***

That is because the person who doesn’t have true faith is thinking about it wrongly.

They don’t see **the confidence of your heart, the resolve of your spirit to truly and fully trust in God.** They can’t see the sure footing you are standing on. You see it and experience it by faith but they have no view of it!!!

They fail to be truly convicted that God has the situation in His sovereign hands.

To them, it is blind or wreckless to have faith in that situation.

Which, is why they can’t join you there. Church: **Faith is NOT blind.**

Also: **Faith is NOT a feeling.**

I have encountered many people over the years who have claimed to be Christians but when talking more with them it became evident that what they believed in or trusted in was not the completed and perfect work of Christ on their behalf but their so called faith was simply a mental assent, or gut feeling that they were good with the creator, God.

But, Faith is not based on a person’s feelings or attitudes.

**If your faith is based on these things, it is why your faith constantly feels unstable.**

True faith is based **wholly in God** who is trustworthy, unchanging, and all powerful.

God is greater than stable. He is completely without any degree of wavering.

There are a lot of people who believe a lot of different things about God and or how one obtains salvation but we must understand that just because someone says they have faith or belief doesn’t mean they are saved.

**Let’s consider the other part of Hebrews 11:1 definition of faith.**

**B> Faith Is: The Assurance of Things Hoped For**

**Hebrews 11:1**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for

It other words, **faith is a deep confidence that the promises of God will come true.**

**We believe this so much that we trust our lives to it.**

Hear me clearly, **Faith doesn't create what we hope for**. That would be a mere mind game.

**It is truly trusting the promises of God. It is one who says, I will take my life off of the temporary and failed things I can see and trust in and I put it on the eternal and absolute promises of God whom I can’t see but whom I totally hope in.**

**It is a Hope or a trust in God’s ability to deliver in opposition to the things we previously hoped in that couldn’t deliver.**

**Psalm 34:8,** O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

**Faith Is:**  being sure of God's promises - that they are worth putting all of our hope in.

This brings me to the object of our faith. Specifically, faith in Jesus Christ.

And even more specifically that Jesus is the promised messiah who lived without sin, died to fully pay for our deserved wrath due our sin and rose victoriously to reign with God forever, just as we one day will.

The late great Dutch Reformed theologian, **Herman Bavinck** says it this way..

“Faith in Christ enables believers in spite of all the riddles that perplex them to cling to the conviction that the God who rules the world is the same loving and compassionate Father who, in Christ, forgave them all their sins accepted them as his children and will bequeath to them eternal blessedness.” **-Herman Bavinck**

The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith says:

“the principle acts of saving faith have immediate relation to Christ, accepting, receiving, and resting upon him alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”

Our Word of Truth Catechism answers:

**Q86. What must we do to be saved?** When we are enabled by the power and will of God, we joyfully and willingly turn from sin and trust in Christ Jesus alone. This is saving faith.

Paul says in.. **Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith.

**To help us climb into the depths of what scripture teaches us about saving faith…Bible Schoolers for centuries have taught that true saving faith has three elements to it:**

**Knowledge, Belief and Trust**

Charles Spurgeon referred to these three as: Awareness, assent, commitment

Let’s look at these one at a time.

1. **Knowledge**: **means you have to know about the object of your faith**

RC Sproul says well: “Faith without “content” is no true faith at all. Before I believe “in” I must believe “that.”

This is why the bible says,

**Romans 10:14** How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?

**Romans 10:17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

We must hear and take into our minds the truth about the Gospel of Jesus before we can believe in it.

1. **Belief: means you have to believe what you now know**

You can know all about God and not know God!

You can study the bible and go to church every week, and not be saved. WHY?

Because you must believe what is true about God

Jesus speaks about this directly talking about the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

**Matt 15:8** This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;

This is very true still today as there are many kinds of people who have knowledge of what a Christian is or what the bible teaches but do not believe the gospel.

They know that Jesus said He is the only way, but they do not agree with what he said.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** …God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and **belief in the truth.**

Calvin said it this way, *“It now remains to pour into the heart itself what the mind has absorbed. For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defense to withstand and drive off all the strata-gems of temptation.”  -John Calvin*

1. **Trust: means you truly and fully surrender yourself to the one you now believe in**

James Montgomery Boice says this well: “Real yielding of oneself to Christ goes beyond knowledge, however full and accurate that knowledge may be, and even beyond agreeing with or being personally moved by the Gospel”

Boice reveals how Belief is needed but not enough,

You can know about God in your head & even believe what you know in your heart but still not have saving faith.

This is what James was emphasizing in **James 2:19** You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! The demons know about God & believed what they knew about him to be true so much so that they shuddered at what they knew to be true, but they did not have saving faith.

I can’t tell you how many well intending family members I have heard say over the years that they think their loved one is in heaven NOT because they witnessed true surrender and submission to Jesus as Lord but only because they simply claim to believe that Jesus was God.

**Trust is committing our lives to Jesus**. It is passing over the line of belonging to ourselves to belonging to Jesus. It is dyeing to ourselves and living in Christ. This truly is our conversion.

**Conversion is a Holy Spirit empowered response to the gospel call, by which a person willingly and sincerely repents of sin and places his/her complete trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.**

The word conversion itself means "turning”. Here it represents a spiritual turn, a turning from sin and turning to Christ. The turning from sin is called repentance and the turning to Christ is called faith.

**John 3:16** …whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Here John uses a surprising phrase when he does not simply say, "whoever believes him" (that is, believes that what he says is true and able to be trusted), but rather, "whoever believes in him."

The Greek phrase is better translated **"believe into him"**.

This is the key difference between believing about or just believing something to be true and banking your life on it.

You are putting all of your life on Christ. If Christ is not enough you are done. But if he is, then you are saved. There is not parachute here. It is all or nothing. We don’t add a little faith in Christ so we can be covered. No, scripture says we die to ourselves and trust completely in Christ alone.

In this, we must see that a believer in Jesus is not someone who just proclaims belief in Jesus or trust in Jesus at one time. But a true believer is one who lives their life trusting in… Believing into Jesus.

If your life is marked by a repetition of stated proclamations of belief about Jesus but you still at the end of the day live your life trusting in yourself then you are still on the throne of your life and you are still dead in your sin. It is only when our stated proclamation of belief that Jesus is savior and lord is backed by a life that submits to Jesus as Lord and trust God’s will and lives for and obeys God that we should have confidence that our claim of belief is not superficial.

SO, TRUE SAVING FAITH IS:

1. **Knowledge – you have to know about the object of your faith**
2. **Belief – you have to believe what you now know in your heart**
3. **Trust – you have to completely surrender yourself to the one you believe in**

I will say quickly: **that all of us believe something and are trusting in something.**

The question is **who or what are you believing and trusting in?**

And do you see that for faith to truly go to work your life our belief and trust into Christ can’t be partial but it must be all in. We trust our entire life to it or we don’t!!

So that is hopefully a very round foundation of what Faith is and what it isn’t.

Now, let’s take a few moments to talk about why the absence of faith in one’s life is sin!

**2. The Absence of Faith is Sin**

***The all-pervasive fault in every sin is it’s character of unbelief.***

Paul makes this abundantly clear in his sobering words in…

**Romans 14:23:** “For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

To not think or act in faith in God is to think or act in the flesh apart from God. It’s very source and goal is absent of trust in God. This is sin. This is to deny what God is due from His creation.

That anything and everything we would do would be on the very foundation of true and total faith in God. To not think or act in faith is to remove God. It is to disrespect God and disobey Him!!

*Let me say it again,* ***The all-pervasive fault in every sin is it’s character of unbelief.***

By unbelief, I do not mean merely refusal to accept the truths of the Bible.

Again, we are not saved by giving mental assent to the promises of God.

We are saved by whether we truly and fully hope with our hearts in those promises and truths.

The failure of the heart to be totally confident in and submitted to the promises of God

The failure of the heart to rejoice and find pleasure in His way and provision is the root and essence of all sin. **Hebrews 11:6** says, **Without faith it is impossible to please God.**

**All we do is sin apart from saving faith.** **WHY?**

Because the aim of our thoughts, our deeds, our words, even if they are sacrificial, generous, loving, kind… their aim, their purpose is not for the glory of God and so it is sinful and wicked because it cheats the creator for all that He is due and worthy of.

The source and activity of thought or deed that are not birthed from faith, from trusting God, are therefore birthed from the flesh, from sin, from self.

Apart from Christ, from saving faith, everyone is dead in sin and surely walks or practices only sin, surly they are on the path to destruction as they follow the course of this world.

The reason this is so penetrating is that it goes to the root of all sinful actions and attitudes, namely, the failure to trust God. “For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.” **Romans 14:23**

Think about that.. “Whatever”.. that means, Everything, anything!

That means, any act or attitude which is not from saving faith unto the glory of God is sin, no matter how good or helpful or moral it may appear to men. Understand that, God always looks beyond the action. He looks to the heart… to the motivation of that thought, word or action.

So, the pressing question before us must be…

**3. How does someone have faith?**

Paul gives us the answer so powerful and clear in one famous verse..

**Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

Paul’s immediate clarity after declaring that we are saved through faith is to help us see that our Faith is not “of” ourselves, it is a gift of God.

Grace is an undeserved and unobligated free gift from God. It is his choice and His action to give to us what which we do not deserve and that which He is not obligated to give.

**That gift is faith!**

More specifically it is saving faith in Jesus Christ so that He alone is our savior and Lord.

This is a critical clarity because if or when we believe that our faith in Jesus unto salvation is of us and not of God then we have something we contribute to our salvation and therefore something to boast in. This is Paul’s major point. Faith is a gift of God!! It is not something we do on our own!

Now, don’t get me wrong, don’t miss this:

**We are the ones who believe. (no one believes for you)**

but we must see that scripture teaches us that the faith we exercise is given to us by God.

Without his gifting it to us, we would not exercise it!

**God is the one who causes the elect to believe, He works faith in us.**

**Philippians 2:13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Faith is a gift of God.

Paul & Peter, both clearly say this…

**Philippians 1:29** For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

Both are a gift. Belief (faith) and suffering for the name of Christ.

We do both. The believing and the suffering.

No one does it for us.

But both are a gift of God and therefore only done by us because he entrust them to us to do. Therefore we have nothing to boast in.

**2 Peter 1:1** Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

We have received our faith as a precious gift from God.

In Hebrews 12 we are told that Jesus is *“the Author and the Finisher of our Faith”* (Hebrews 12:2).

The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith affirms this in saying: “This faith, although it be in different stages, and may (at times) be weak or strong, … it gets the victory, growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.”

Oh let us praise Him for his great and life changing gift of Saving Faith.

Now, scripture speaks a lot of superficial faith. That is something people call faith and think is faith but in the end it is not. It is superficial, it is fake, it is not saving dependance on Christ.

**4. Superficial Faith vs Living Faith:**

**Jesus says in.. Matthew 7:21** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

What Jesus is revealing here is the reality that many will think that their superficial faith is saving when it is not. So this causes us to pause and talk about the difference between superficial faith and genuine saving faith. James gets to the core of this in his letter by essentially saying again and again that true saving faith is not just something we say we have but it is something that goes to work in our lives. It bears fruit that we and others can see and it endures to the end.

**James 2:18** But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Jesus spoke this way as well on a number of occasions.

**Matthew 7:16-20** You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Church, Hear it clearly today:

The evidence of True Faith in God is ongoing God Honoring works.

It is the evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit at work in your life.

Yes, You are saved by Faith Alone. But that Faith will not remain alone.. it will go to work.

James and Jesus point is to say, True Faith will show fruit of the spirit. It will produce a lifestyle of sacrificial love and work that you didn’t do prior to being saved. True faith will find its way to action. It will show the evidence of being born again by God.

If a person’s belief shows no real evidence of spiritual new birth (regeneration) which then produces the fruit of the spirit ( the evidence of spiritual life and conviction and growth) then what you have is not saving faith. **It is faith that is good for nothing!** It is superficial.

Four times James makes this emphasis in this section of the text.

v14- “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?”

v17- “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

v20- “faith apart from works is useless”

v26- “faith apart from works is dead”

James is saying Faith or belief in God is dead, it’s fake, it’s superficial if it doesn’t do anything….

If it doesn’t act…. IF it doesn’t obey Him… If it doesn’t go to work...

It is like saying you trust something or someone but you never actually trust them?

Christian: **You must make this personal today.**

**You must not let this casually move by you.**

If you claim salvation in Jesus Christ it means you belong to him. It means you long for Him.

You live for Him. You prioritize your life for Him, His word, His church & his work entrusted to you.

It means when you are confronted with sin in your life form his word you confess it as sin and turn to a new path that honors God. It doesn’t matter what it cost you or what it changes in your plans or preferences. You belong to God.

You walk by Faith in Him and trust in Him. You believe that his way is best. It doesn’t matter how hard it might be or what it might cost you.. You will live by Faith and therefore show your faith by your works.

Consider James words in..

**James 2:20** Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

**Do you want to die? To you want to fail? Do you want to be proven wrong?**

James is direct to bring stern warning that the foolish person will be shown that faith apart from works is useless or dead. It’s not true faith in God. It is manmade. It is not the perfect work of God to give you saving faith that changes your life and produces the fruit of the spirit and matures in progressive sanctification. It is man-made religion. It is hanging your hat.. better your life… better, your eternal life on a superstition.

**May everyone who can hear my voice head this warning today.** See clearly that a casual proclaimed faith in God without a life of evidence of repentance from sin and growth in godliness is DEAD Faith.

It was never saving and it is not alive. It is useless. It is deception. It is foolish.

Oh how I pray you are not satisfied with the casual Christianity that is marketed and ever so popular in today’s culture. A faith that is superstitious and unbiblical in its origins. A faith that is lifeless and fruitless in its actions.

**May our Faith be shown, be evidenced, be proven by our works.**

May we leave here today convicted to not take lightly the things of God but to be overwhelmed at his Grace and love and faithfulness in our lives. To save wretched sinners and indwell us with the Holy Spirit unto salvation, transformation, sanctification and one day glorification.

**According to Scripture, a person who professes Christ as Lord and Savior but who does not live with a Christ honoring, Christ obeying life is a counterfeit, a fraud and the faith they claim is dead and not living or saving.**

**A person with dead faith does not and cannot produce works that are truly God honoring and righteous and the absence of such works is the evidence of the absence of trust saving faith.**

Those who are true believers! Those who Paul emphasizes are *God’s workmanship, who are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

***Ephesians 2:10***

**So what does it look like to have faith and to practice the spiritual discipline of faith?**

**What does it look like when faith goes to work in our life?**

**5. What does the spiritual discipline of faith mean for our life?**

**A- Our faith means Salvation**

**Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God

According to the authority of SCRIPTURE ALONE we are saved by GRACE ALONE

through FAITH ALONE in CHRIST ALONE for the GLORY OF GOD ALONE

Listen to this important clarity we receive in this great statement!

**We are Saved BY grace and THROUGH Faith**

**We are saved “Because” of God’s grace. This is the “Why” we are saved.**

**Not because we were deserving or because he was obligated but only because He willed it so.**

**If you are saved, if you are a true believer in Jesus Christ…**

**Why are you a Christian? Because of God’s amazing gift of Grace.**

**How are you a Christian? Through “faith” in Christ alone.**

**The vehicle of our salvation, the means of our salvation, the doing of our salivation,**

**Is not anything we do or perform or merit but it is a “Trusting” in the doing, the performance, the merit, the power of another. That is, Jesus Christ.**

**Our word of truth catechism say this so well. In answering the question…**

**What is Saving Faith?**

Rather than trusting one’s own assumed worth, works, or ability,

a person repents and believes that Jesus is God,

trusts in Jesus’ sinless life of perfect obedience,

Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross in his/her place,

and Jesus’ rising from the dead to claim salvation and victory for him/her.

Saving faith is produced in the elect by God

and is always accompanied by progressive sanctification and ongoing repentance from sin. **-WOTC**

This is the greatest application of our faith. Salvation! Our faith means we no longer trust in our own performance or ability but Jesus performance in our place and His ability to see us through to glory!

This is our saving faith at work. **Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith…

Not only are we saved but …

**B- Our Faith means Devotion to God and Righteous Living**

**Romans 8:7-8 says it clearly:** For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Before God by His grace gave us saving faith, we wanted nothing to do with honoring God.

In our flesh we lived for ourselves and therefore in complete disobedience to God.

But in saving faith we “who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed. and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. **Romans 6:17-18**

In Faith, we live for Christ now. He is our Lord. His word is our guide and authority to life and faith.

Paul says in **Ephesians 4:22-24** … put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Here we see how our faith goes to work to turn from the old ways of the flesh and our corrupt deceitful desires and to live out our faith that is created in the likeness of God and produces true righteousness and holiness.

Our faith causes us to have new longings.

We lose our taste for what is impure and unrighteous and we grow in our desire for what honors God. There are so many ways that your faith in Christ motivates you to live differently for the Lord.

You think differently, you speak differently, you prioritize your life differently. This is the outworking of our faith. Faith that trust God’s ways are best and faith that acts.

**C- Our Faith means Boldness and Confidence**

Paul says in..

**Ephesians 3:11-12**  …in Christ Jesus our Lord… we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

The Greek word Paul uses here for ***boldness*** intends to convey not just an ability to speak freely or an ability to be frank (to be bold) but **a true freedom and fearlessness.**

Christian: Think about all what you personally have overcome in Christ.

Think about the fact that the most vile and wretched person is made PURE “in Christ” to such a degree that he/she can confidently approach the Holy God. The Holy God who is a consuming fire.

Think about that… nothing else that you face in a lifetime will have the weight that this has.

Now, **If this is true of you who are “IN CHRIST”, then what do you have to fear?**

The reality is: **We who belong to God by the blood of Christ have nothing to fear.**

I want you to really do business with this today: Consider for a moment..

**What do you fear?**

**What makes you unsettled and worried?**

**What will you go to extremes to avoid?**

Examples: loss of money, love one, health, death, hard work down the drain, the maligning of your reputation

Christian: You belong to Christ. You are secure in God. Nothing can take you out of his grip.

Nothing can overcome His plan for your life and your days.

The key is: **you must see who you truly are in Christ.**

This is so important because in many ways it is the very root and grounding of your faith at work.

**Do you truly trust God with all of your life?**

**Is your identity truly grounded not in what others say or think about you but who you are in Christ?**

Consider the famous words of King David as we meditates on his good and faithful shepherd!

**Psalm 23:4** Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

First, “death is a part of this life”. While death is our enemy. Jesus has overcome death on our behalf so that when he ordains we die, and all of us will one day, **we have nothing to fear.**

**When our faith is at work and we are rightly living out our identity in Christ we truly believe what Jesus says in…**

**Matthew 10:28** And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

**Now you might be sitting here thinking, “that is so lofty… so not real. You cannot truly be without fear in death”**  But we have examples of faithful brothers who have come before us. ***Look with me really quick at Acts chapter 7..***

*Here a brother in Christ named Stephen who just finished testifying* and at the end of it this happened…

**Acts 7:54-60**Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. **55**But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. **56**And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” **57**But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. **58**Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59**And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” **60**And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

While they were stoning Stephen to death, he prayed, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”

**-Stephen is about to be murdered at the hand of an angry mob and he is fearless. WHY?**

**Because he understands by Faith that this world and this life are not his home anymore.**

**It was his mission field. He understands that he is alive so that he can bring witness.**

His faith understands what many times we can miss….

**That this life is not about comfort or retirement or bank accounts or vacations or nice cars …..**

**it is about testimony of the Living God who took on flesh and died in our place so that we will enjoy Him forever!**

This is why we don’t remove ourselves from the days that God has called us to live but we live, we serve, we worship, we disciple, we testify!

**Christian: You will not fear when you have nothing to lose.**

Paul understood this so well, look at:

**Philippians 3:8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

Paul has a no fear in losing everything because of what he has FOUND in Christ!

In Christ, our faith at work means we have true boldness, true fearlessness! Praise God!

May it be so.

If you are finding this is not how you are living lately, then praise God for view of an area you need to repent of. Own it, confess it to a brother or sister in Christ and turn from it. Invite others to join you, help you and hold you accountable. Thank God for helping you through it.

**D- Our Faith means Perseverance to the End**

Our faith will mean we will finish the race with God!

It is a great comfort to know and hope in and rest in the truth that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. **Philippians 1:6**

The Doctrine of the **“Perseverance of the Saints”** is one of the most precious truths of the scriptures to the born again Christian because it assures us that if we are truly saved in Christ then our faith will finish the race and we won’t bow out.

**The Perseverance of the Saints**:God keeps His saved people forever. The elect are saved and eternally secure by God’s power and promise. Because of grace, God works so those whom He has chosen and given eternal salvation, by the power and work of the Holy Spirit, are enabled to persevere in faith forever. A person shows that he/she was truly saved by God by persevering in faith in Christ until the end.

The Bible teaches that God elects, God saves and God justifies and God perseveres those whom he chooses. This means, Not one drop of Jesus atoning blood was spilled as a waste.

And at no moment can we slip out the back door on the Holy Presence and power of the Holy Spirit who has set his seal on our lives.

God will not lose any he has saved!

**John 6:39.** “This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at that last day.”

He did not make a mistake in their election. He did not make a mistake at the cross.

He did not make a mistake in their new birth. And He does not make a mistake in their perseverance to glory.

**Praise God for this good news!!! Praise God for His guarantee of our inheritance kept until we acquire possession of it. For His eternal glory.**

**Ephesians 1:13-14** In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, **to the praise of his glory.**

Your faith will finish!! This is a huge help to us when we are struggling and knocked down. For those of us who truly trust in Christ we trust in Him the entire way. Our faith is not momentary and it is not in threat of finding the back door. No, we will finish in faith!

**6. How do we practice the spiritual discipline of faith?**

Paul says to the Corinthian church in …

**2 Corinthians 5:7** for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Walking by sight means you are dependent on your circumstances going well.

What you see and experience in the here and now determines how you live and your joy.

Walking by faith means you know you are in Christ and for eternity and you rest in Him.

The faith you have in Him determines how you live and Christ is the source of your joy.

Not your circumstances.

This means when you marriage is really hard. You trust in God and your joy is in Christ.

When the kids are disobedient and floundering. You trust in God and your joy is in Christ.

When your bank account is low. You trust in God and your joy is in Christ.

When your loved one is suffering illness and might be close to death or lifelong impermeant. You trust in God and your joy is in Christ.

When a person you love betrays you. You trust in God and your joy is in Christ.

When you society is falling apart and the sinful worlds agenda is growing it’s influence. You trust in God and your joy is in Christ.

**Do you remember the context of that famous verse?** “walk by faith, not by sight”

It is 2 Corinthians 5:7. Let me read you the context of that verse because it is really helpful.

**2 Corinthians 5:1-8** For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, **7 for we walk by faith, not by sight**. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Paul is speaking of the trouble we face.. The temporariness of it and that we take courage and live by faith and not by sight because of the promises of God.

The Eternity that awaits us.. The guarantee we who have the Sprit have.

Yes we long to be home with the Lord but we walk by Faith the mean time.

AMEN!

**AW PINK-** says this so well.

“What if trials come thick and fast, what if I am misunderstood and unappreciated, what if Satan roars and rages against me? "If God be for us who can be against us?"

Believe in God. Believe in His absolute sovereignty, His infinite wisdom, His unchanging faithfulness, His wondrous love. Jesus says, "Believe also in me."

I am the One who died for thy sins and rose again for thy justification; I am the One who ever liveth to make intercession for thee. I am the same, yesterday, and to-day, and forever. I am the One who shall come again to receive you unto Myself, and ye shall be forever with Me. Yes, "believe also in me!"

**Amen and amen!!**

**How do better practice the spiritual discipline of our Faith?**

**- By Feasting on God’s word!** This is how we are reminded of God’s truths and promises and the testimony of God’s hand in mankind from the beginning of time, of His victory and His power.

**- By Relying on Each Other.** God has saved the faithful into the family of God so that we have shepherds to watch out for us and to lead us and so that we have each other to re-orient us to the Gospel and to God.

**- By Walking with God.** We must learn to walk and talk with Him all the time. This is how we walk by faith. Never losing sight of Him!

\*this is why one of my favorite parts of the gospel narrative is Peter walking on the water because it’s reminder to us is so simple but so true. \*recap what happened…

Beloved, Know that God present and not distant. Trust that He is with you and at work in all things.

This is how we walk by faith and not by sight.

**Church: He will hold us fast**! May we walk by Faith in Him to whom it all belongs, who whom is in control and to whom we can fully trust! Amen.

Let me close with one of my favorite reminders God gives us in scripture that undergirds our living in faith and it is..

**Proverbs 3:5-8** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. 7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones