

WATCH OUT FOR THE ENEMIES OF FAITH

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We're reviewing faith.

We saw last week that "the just shall live by faith" ... it appears in the Bible 4 times. To live by faith is more than just paying occasional lip service!

We also saw that we are to FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH. If there's a fight — it suggests there will be enemies.

We started looking at the enemies of faith — often they are counterfeits — they look like faith — but aren't. And so they let us down.

DON'T CONFUSE FAITH WITH FEELINGS

Our feelings may follow our faith ... but not the same. God's Word ... His promises ... are true whether we feel it or not.

FAITH IS A DECISION TO BELIEVE GOD'S WORD. Don't be put off by your feelings.

FAITH IS NOT MENTAL ASSENT

Just agreeing with the logic of the Bible and its various texts is not faith. FAITH IS A MATTER OF THE HEART. Jesus talked of the person who does not doubt in their heart — but believes (in their heart).

Faith in two places. Faith in your mouth and faith in your heart.

WATCH OUT FOR A DEAD FAITH

Bible faith leads to corresponding action. If there are no actions ... it's not real faith.

James 2:14

14 What does it profit, my brethren, **if someone says he has faith but does not have works?** **Can faith save him?**

James 2:17-20

17 Thus also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**

18 **But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.**

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that **faith without works is dead?**

James 2:26

26 **For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**

So — if we ever say we have faith — we should be able to point to corresponding actions!

Then last week we got as far as:

DON'T CONFUSE FAITH WITH PRESUMPTUOUSNESS

To be presumptuous is to believe something where we didn't have a scripture or clear Word of God. We may be sincere — but sincerity is not enough.

We saw last week how ancient Judah trusted in the presence of God's Temple to protect them from invasion from Babylon. God said they trusted in lying words. They believed lying words.

That's presumptuousness. Wishful thinking.

God reminded them of Shiloh. Israel took the Ark of the Covenant into battle against the Philistines — believed they would be victorious. They had complete “faith” — yet it was just presumptuousness!

They were completely defeated ... despite their belief and sincerity.

The Ark of the Covenant was even captured!

A further illustration:

Deuteronomy 1:34-36

34 “And the Lord heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying,

35 **Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers,**

36 **except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it,** and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, **because he wholly followed the Lord.**

Deuteronomy 1:40-45

40 But as for you, turn and take your journey into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.’

41 “Then you answered and said to me, **We have sinned against the Lord; we will go up and fight, just as the Lord our God commanded us.**’ And when everyone of you had girded on his weapons of war, you were ready to go up into the mountain.

42 “**And the Lord said to me, ‘Tell them, “Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies.”**”

43 **So I spoke to you; yet you would not listen, but rebelled against the command of the Lord, and presumptuously went up into the mountain.**

44 And the Amorites who dwelt in that mountain came out against you and chased you as bees do, and drove you back from Seir to Hormah.

45 **Then you returned and wept before the Lord, but the Lord would not listen to your voice nor give ear to you.**

Somehow they thought they’d be okay? “God brought us here ... we’re descendants of Abraham ... this is the Promised Land ... He’ll surely bless us now if we line-up with His original plan”? That was their opinion.

At one time they did “have a scripture” to depend on. But no longer! Now they’re presumptuous — believing something based upon wishful thinking.

We can’t just say “I’ll do this by faith” ... and choose to follow our worldly opinions — hoping that God will somehow back us up.

Faith is based on what God’s Word says — not our opinions (even our sincere opinions).

FAITH WON'T WORK IF WE'RE IN KNOWN DISOBEDIENCE

Isaiah 59:1-2

1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened,

That it cannot save;

Nor His ear heavy,

That it cannot hear.

2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God;

And your sins have hidden His face from you,

So that He will not hear.

Almost certainly involved in Jeremiah 7 and 1 Samuel 4 that we looked at earlier.

We can't expect to walk on our own worldly path ... and expect God to bless us. (That would be presumptuous too).

Psalms 66:16-20

16 Come and hear, all you who fear God,
And I will declare what He has done for my soul.

17 I cried to Him with my mouth,
And He was extolled with my tongue.

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.

19 But certainly God has heard me;
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed be God,
Who has not turned away my prayer,
Nor His mercy from me!

If we know we're in sin ... comfortable with it — don't expect any answers!

1 John 3:18-23

18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.

20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

21 Beloved, **if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.**

22 **And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.**

23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

1 John 3:21 (NET)

21 ... **if our conscience does not condemn us,** ...

We can't have confidence ... trust ... faith — if we know in our hearts that we're in conflict with God and His Word.

It is not too far now to Passover. It's that time of the year when we often examine ourselves? See how we're doing?

A MAJOR ENEMY TO FAITH — FEAR

Something most of us are prone to? At least on occasions.

Fear will nullify faith. Partly because they are very similar.

FAITH IS BELIEVING — FEAR IS BELIEVING (bad things rather than God's Promises).

Faith comes by hearing — The Word of God. **Fear comes by hearing** — the word of Satan or this world.

When fear enters — faith departs!

Mark 4:35-40

35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side."

36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.

37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.

38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

40 But He said to them, "**Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?**"

Full of fear = no faith. They walked by sight!

Mark 5:21-24

21 Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea.

22 And behold, **one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name.** And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet

23 and begged Him earnestly, saying, "**My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.**"

24 So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

He took action to get to Jesus.

Mark 5:35-36

35 While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

36 **As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."**

ASV: "Fear not: only believe".

Mark 5:37-43

37 And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James.

38 Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly.

39 When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

40 And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying.

41 Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, “Talitha, cumi,” which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”

42 Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.

43 But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.

No doubt Jairus was tossed around by his emotions ... but Jesus ideally wanted him to hold fast to his earlier confession.

Don't walk by sight. Maintain your faith decision. Resist fear.

We all should have a resource to combat fear.

2 Timothy 1:4-7

4 greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy,

5 **when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you**, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. (*Genuine faith — authentic faith — not a dead faith*)

6 **Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.**

7 **For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.**

Assuming we have God's spirit ... it should influence our thinking ... how we relate to God's Word. We have a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. A special resource — a supernatural resource.

ANOTHER ENEMY: LACK OF PATIENCE

We live in an instant generation! Real-time news reports ... microwave meals.

Waiting patiently can be difficult.

Mark 11:20-24

20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.”

22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "**Have faith in God.**

23 **For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.**

24 Therefore I say to you, **whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.**

Whatever you ask ... believe. But for how long? One minute ... one day?

When do you stop believing? If in faith — you will never stop — till you have it!

James 1:2-8

2 **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,**

3 **knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.**

4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

5 **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**

6 **But let him ask in faith, with no doubting,** for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

7 **For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;**

8 **he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**

The testing of your faith produces patience. Patience = endurance = constancy.

It doesn't wobble. Not up and down. Believes ... and continues to believe — for decades if necessary.

Hebrews 6:11-15

11 **And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,**

12 **that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

14 saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”
15 And so, **after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.**

FAITH AND PATIENCE — THE POWER TWINS!

Faith is great ... but if it only last two minutes ...? Faith has to be held up by patience.

Hebrews 10:19-23

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 **and having a High Priest over the house of God,**

22 **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**

23 **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.**

Hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering — no matter how long it seems to be taking. GOD IS FAITHFUL!

FAITH AND PATIENCE.

Hebrews 10:35-39

35 **Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.**

36 For **you have need of endurance**, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

37 “For yet a little while,

And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

38 **Now the just shall live by faith;**

But if anyone draws back,

My soul has no pleasure in him.”

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, **but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.**

We need endurance (the same word as “patience” in James 1:3-4).

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH!

Don't draw back. Continue!

Hebrews 10:39 (THE VOICE)

39 **... we are of the company who live by faith and so are saved.**

The tendency — if we walk more “by sight” — is to pull back — to give up — if we see no progress “soon”.

But scripture is clear. Patience and endurance are necessary. The lack of patience is an enemy!

ONE FINAL ENEMY: TRADITION

Man-made teachings that make the Word of God of none effect (Jesus' words to religious leaders).

We need to find out for ourselves what God's Word says. And be accurate.

SPEND GOOD TIME IN THE BIBLE.

FAITH COMES BY HEARING ... AND HEARING ... THE WORD OF GOD.

Watch out for mere traditions:

- Paul's Thorn in the Flesh was a sickness God gave him. God may make you sick too. (That has nothing to do with scripture — a mere tradition)
- You can only pray 3 times for healing. After that ... just accept it's God's will for you to be sick.

Conclusion:

- GET INTO THE WORD
- WATCH OUT FOR THE ENEMIES OF FAITH — THEY'RE REAL!