

HEAVENLY BREAD Volume 1 Issue 10 2009



A monthly devotional with inspiring words for daily living

HEAVENLY BREAD Volume 1 Issue 10 2009

Growing Faith while waiting for the harvest



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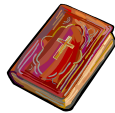
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HEAVENLY BREAD MISSION AND GOALS

Heavenly Bread's mission is to provide inspirational devotional reading for all believers in our efforts to uplift the name of Jesus while spreading the gospel message of Christ throughout the world. Our meditation scriptures are designed to encourage more Bible reading, study and meditation as it is our sword used in our spiritual warfare with Satan.

It is our goal to obey Christ's command as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20 by going into the entire world beginning in our Jerusalem, proceeding onto Judea, Samaria, and to continuing throughout the entire world until every man, woman and child have been taught Christ.



The Faithful Delivered: Jude 3

....ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

What does it mean to be faithful? There are many terms that are associated with faithful, which are reliable, dependable, sure, firm, steadfast, conscientious, and incorruptible and others. The Student Bible Dictionary (P.90) defines faithful as “true (Proverbs 20:6), steady (Acts 16:15); both definitions agree that a faithful person is one who is true to his/her calling and is dedicated to the message of Christ. More importantly, a faithful person can be depended upon to stand firm on the Word of God in the face of false teachers and other oppositions. It matters not if those oppositions come within the visible church and or those who deny that the Bible is the final authority or those who try to pervert or distort its message, which is Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the writer of Jude encourages all faithful believers to contend for the faith as all faithful believers are placed under the obligation to “contend for the faith” as this is a way of life. Faithful believers can and do stand firm in their mission of witnessing Christ as all believers have the assurances of the Holy Spirit’s presence as promised. Lastly, faithful believers have the assurances of their rewards in heaven.

The faithful are delivered because of their steadfastness in Christ.

Stay With God—See His Mercy: Jude 21

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

How do we see mercy? Mercy is seen as compassion, love, sympathy, a deep caring and forgiveness. Also, it is seen as giving or receiving something that we do not deserve. More importantly, mercy is seen as God withholding punishment when it was deserved. Mercy is also seen as God's covenant grace with His people when justice required punishment as His grace was executed through Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. God's mercy is on display as it is His desire for all to be saved and spend eternity with Him.

God's mercy is seen in His long suffering and love, however, man's disobedience does cause God's wrath to rain down upon humanity as witness with the nation of Israel in their constant disobedience to His laws and commands.

Therefore, in spite of God's agape love and long suffering He cannot and will not look on sin as recorded in scripture. Why? This is because of His righteous nature; then what are we to do? We are encouraged to stay with God, obey His commandments and see the goodness of the Lord through His loving kindness.

Stay with God for His mercy endureth for ever.

The all Wise God: Jude 25

*To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and
majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.
Amen.*

The preceding verse in Jude gives us a glimpse into why God is wise and our Saviour because He is the creator and sustainer of all that exist from the beginning of time through eternity. God's wisdom is seen as the planetary bodies are held in their respective orbits as is the earth on which we live. Man walks in an upright position without falling, he breathes air that he cannot see, touch or control. God directs the sun to shine giving light and warming the earth even on the coldest of days the earth remains warm as God so designed it. God established the four seasons providing for all creation while holding the balance of nature in place. More importantly, God in His divine wisdom made provisions for all man's needs that He so richly provides "according to His riches and glory."

God created man in His likeness and image even though He knew man was going to disobey Him and break the covenant relationship between the two, but God in His divine wisdom provided a plan to restore that fellowship. The plan was for His Son Jesus Christ to become man's sacrificial lamb that would shed His precious blood for all humanity. ***This Jesus did!***

What God would create, sustain and provide for all our needs? The God of all creations, the true and living God. ***The all wise God.***

The High Calling Of God: Philippians 3:12-16

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

What is your high calling from God? All believers have been called to a special ministry in the body of Christ by God Himself for the purpose of glorifying Him and His church. Just as believers have accepted God's gift of salvation so must we accept His call to ministry and do so with dedication, perseverance, patience and faithfulness. What are some of the ministries given by God? Some ministries are: (a) preaching (b) teaching, (c) witnessing, (d) some are called to be apostles, (e) some evangelists and (f) some are called to serve others in the house of the Lord. Like the apostle Paul believers must likened our calling as a runner in a race, therefore exerting all our strength and intense concentration on the mission and goal that has been set before us in our called ministry.

What is the mission that all believers have? The mission is to spread the gospel message of Christ in the entire world as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20 as well as being a light in a sin darkened world magnifying Christ as we carry out our called ministry. The goal of our mission is to make disciples and glorify God as we remain in one with Christ until we reach our heavenly home. How do believers remain focused on and dedicated to their calling? In verse 13

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Paul gives profound encouragement that all believers should do, which is to forget those things that is behind (the old man) and remain focused on what lies ahead, which is the believer's new life in Christ and living in total obedience to Him and His message of salvation. Another thought is that Hebrews 12:1 expresses our high calling as a race that is set in a lifelong test of faith as this race is to be run with awareness that the temptation to give up as our greatest danger. This is due in part to the many temptations that the believer encounters daily; however, believers are encouraged to cast aside the weight of sin which is designed to hinder the believer from completing his/her heavenly journey while being obedient to his/her high calling from God.

The question now becomes, how does the believer combat the many temptations encountered while on this journey? Believers have the presence of the Holy Spirit to aid them in remaining steadfast in his/her called ministry while withstanding Satan's attacks. Ephesians 6:10-18 gives us our effective weapons while on this journey. It is noteworthy to reflect on the apostle Paul's life and the many satanic attacks he encountered while preaching Christ as well as Jesus' disciples and how they were persecuted, but they remained steadfast to their calling. ***What are we to do?***

Believers today are encouraged to stand firm in their calling from God as He will see you through.

***Believers—hear and answer the calling from God.
What a blessing to be called by God?***

The Fringe As a Remembrance: Numbers 15:37-41

And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and they ye see not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.

What is a fringe? Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary (P. 290) defines fringe as "the tassel of twisted cords fastened to the outer garments of Israelites to remind them of their obligations as Israelites to be loyal to Jehovah." Merriam-Webster School Dictionary supports Zondervan's definition of fringe as a border.

What were the Israelites to remember? The Israelites were to remember all God's commandments, which were His laws and statutes, His holiness and righteousness as well as His delivering them from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. He was to be their God as he was and is our Savior. God reminded Israel they were not to worship any other god. As the true God is a jealous God and is to be first in the lives of all. The moral here is to always remember the blessing more than the blessings.

What is your fringe? It should be your salvation through Jesus Christ and living holy lives magnifying Him for what He has done.

Salvation freed us –The Holy Spirit keeps us! What a remembrance?

The Nazarite Vow; What is your Vow? Numbers 6:2-8

He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.

What is a Nazarite? The word Nazarite means to be set apart, therefore a Nazarite is a person who has dedicated him or herself totally to God. This dedication could be for a special season (time) or for a lifetime commitment to the Lord. The Nazarite's vow is that the person must refrain from drinking alcohol or cutting ones hair.

God raised up Nazarites that through the Nazarite's lifestyle it would demonstrate the highest standards of holiness, sanctity and total commitment to God for His people. As this lifestyle was designed to teach the nation of Israel and all believers that total devotion to God must come first as this devotion begins in the heart of man and is professed outward. Also, the Nazarite vow and lifestyle is an example that all Christians must strive to become. This lifestyle represents purity, self-denial and holiness to God as well as being separated from worldliness. This can be achieved with the help of the Holy Spirit.

All believers are to live holy lives unto God according to His standards for He is holy. Therefore, let's re-ask the question, ***What is your vow?***

Elisha's Prayer: II Kings 2:9b

And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

Let's begin today's discussion by looking at both Elijah and Elisha and their relationship to God and answer what was Elisha's prayer? Elijah was a devout man of God who stood on God's Word in the face of an apathetic people (Israel). Sins and idolatry was rampant in Israel as Elijah preached repentance. However, God had a remnant of faithful who adhered to God's Word.

Elijah was nearing the end of his prophetic ministry and life the young Elisha was beginning his ministry. Elisha was considered Elijah's son in the ministry. Therefore, Elijah knowing what lay ahead for the young prophet wanted to equip him. The young prophet asked his spiritual father to give him his spiritual inheritance. This was so the young prophet could continue Elijah's mission. Scripture records Elisha's prayer request being answered by God prior to Elijah's being taken to heaven without seeing death the same as Enoch (Genesis 5:24). Elisha's ministry was not without difficulties, but Elisha persevered in the Lord.

The moral is, as believers we are to stand firm in our conviction, devotion and ministry to and for the Lord. ***As God answered Elisha's prayer, He will answer yours.***

Believers are Called to Be Holy: 1 Peter 1:13-25

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

What does it mean to be holy? Holiness carries a connotation of being separated from all ungodliness this world has to offer. It also means to set apart for love and devotion to God and service to and for Him while being like Him. Being holy is the goal of all believers who have their election in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4). Believers' election means to be chosen by God for all those who believe in Jesus Christ. Also, election in this sense means that believers are brought into the body of Christ, the church. ***O! What a blessing to be chosen by God to be in His body, the church?***

The question now becomes, how are believers made holy? Believers are made holy by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and by Jesus' death on the cross (v. 2). Furthermore, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is predicated on the believer's faith in Jesus Christ and accepting Him as God's Son. Also, believers must submit themselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit who is active in believers maintaining an intimate relationship with Christ (John 15:4). Lastly, holiness is a way of life for all who have confessed Christ.

Being Christ-like means being holy

God Moves in a Whirlwind: II Kings 2:11C

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

What is the meaning of Elijah being taken to heaven in whirlwind? Elijah's being taken up to heaven in a whirlwind carries a belief that this is God's way of showing His approval of the great works Elijah had done in his prophetic tenure which include his works, spirit and ministry as Elijah's prophecy occurred during Israel's time when they were indifferent to God and His Word. Another thought here is that regardless of Israel's condition and the difficulties Elijah faced while ministering to the people, Elijah remained totally committed to God and His righteousness as his life and will was aligned with God. For Elijah's dedication to God, Elijah was rewarded by not experiencing death. Lastly, this can be viewed as what will happen in the future with God's faithful believers when Christ returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Other occasions when God moved in a whirlwind is when Enoch was transported to heaven and when God spoke to Job. What does this say about God? God has the power to move when, how and to whom as He chooses. The correlation of the three men is that they were devout in their faith to God. How strong is your faith?

God moves sometimes in a whirlwind.

The Law of God is Perfect: Psalm 19-7-11

The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

For today's discussion we will look at the revelation of God's law as they are made clearer than His creation. What this means is that creation reveals who God is, but His law testifies to His holiness, righteousness and perfection.

With that being said, let us take an in-depth look at God's law from five perspectives, and they are (1) "The law" (His Law) reflects the moral character of God which makes it "perfect" as it influences the soul (v7). (2) "The testimony" of God's law represents His wisdom that is "sure" (reliable) as this assures humanity of God's wise and prudent decisions in ones life (7). (3) "God's status" is His principles for "right" living that produces joy (rejoicing) in the hearts men as men are being made alive to receive God's blessing (v. 8). (4) "The commandments of God" are His light to enlighten the eyes of men (v. 8) which results in righteous living in a covenant relationship with God and others as this leads to the reverential "fear of the Lord" (v. 9). (5) "The judgments" of the Lord as they relate to social life that will insure justice and a right treatment for all (v. 9). More importantly, righteous treatment is more precious than gold (v. 10).

There is no failure in God's law.

The Lord is My Shepherd: Psalm 23:1-6

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

How does this Psalm speak to you? This is a rhetorical question where each person must answer according to his or her relationship with God. For the sake of this discussion we will briefly analyze each verse. First, overall this Psalm is seen as a metaphor where God compares Himself to that of a shepherd in relationship to His people. Two truths are being depicted in this Psalm, which are (a) through Christ and the Holy Spirit, God expresses His love, concern and desire to protect and care for His people. (b) Believers are God's sheep that will sometimes stray from His love and affection, but as His sheep, believers can be assured of the promises made by God when believers answer His voice (calling) and follow Him.

In verse 1 **"I shall not want"** means that all the necessities of life can and will be supplied by God and all believers can be content in knowing that God the good shepherd has made provisions for all facets of our lives. Philippians 4:19 supports this verse as it relates to God supplying all man's needs.

Verse 2 **"He maketh me to lie down"** this verse deals with the presence and nearness of God as He, Christ brings peace to a troubled soul through the Holy Spirit. He turns the parched dry grounds of every situation into green pastures of plenty. When the troubled waters of life are raging, the Holy Spirit, who is God, He "stilled the waters"

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as He is a comforter, Counselor and Helper when life waters are raging out of control.

Verse 3 **“He restoreth my soul”** means life troubles have overtaken God’s children and they have become discouraged, God is there to revive, re-energize troubled souls through His power and grace. Being an all knowing and seeing God, He chooses a path of righteousness, one that conforms to His holiness and as the good shepherd, God will not lead His sheep where trouble abides.

Verse 4 **“Thou are with me”** this verse gives all the assurance that in spite of our Death Valley days, God is with us and there is nothing to fear. Why? Because God said in His word He will “never forsake nor leave” His children and His word is true. Our Death Valley days are life situations that overwhelm all from time to time. The Holy Spirit is the hook that gently draws man back to God.

Verse 5 **“Thou preparest a table”** is a depiction of God providing and caring for His peoples needs in the midst of the many evil forces that surround us daily in this satanic world. Believers have the assurance of eating from God’s table of blessings for all who believe in faith, thanksgiving, and hope are fully protected by the blood of Jesus Christ. More importantly, God showers His love and blessings to the point those believers’ cups overflows. **Look at God’s grace and mercy!**

Lastly, in verse 6 **“goodness and mercy”** shows God’s love and His kindness that shepherds the believer throughout his/her life journey while here on earth. I like to refer to good and mercy as angels walking beside all believers daily.

It can be concluded then that the Lord is the good shepherd who has provided all aspects of humanity’s life—*give it over to Him.*

Monday October 12

Believers: Humbled and Growing In Christ Philippians 4:11-12

*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound:
every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full
and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

For today's discussion we will focus on Paul's writing to the Christians at Philippi letting them know that whatever condition he was in he was content. When we look at the history of Paul he was often persecuted for preaching Christ and was jailed on several occasions. Paul never allowed his situation to deter him from preaching Christ.

See Paul had humbled himself (abased) before the Lord as he knew who he was and had a right view of himself for he knew that the Lord was with him in every situation. More importantly, Paul recognized that his battle was already won, through Christ that was in him "he could do all things." Also, Paul knew that he had an overflow (abound) of God's love which allowed him to grow in His grace.

The key to Paul's contentment was that he realized his given circumstances was to learn dependence upon Christ. This principle applies to believers today. Believers who humble themselves before the Lord will find contentment in every situation as we are conquerors in Christ. Believers who are abased and abound simultaneously are growing in Christ as He is the source of a peaceful and contented heart.

Humility before Christ = and abundance of

Babes In Christ: 1 Peter 2:2

As Newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.

Peter is encouraging new believers in Christ to desire the word of God as newborn babes desire his or her mother's milk for nourishment, so must the believer desire the nourishment of God's Word. As the believer's spiritual life grows his/her desire for the Word of God should increase as this is the believers' spiritual food. An indication of believers (newborns and older Christians) spiritual growth is by ones diminished desire for the old way of life which was filled with the desires of this world.

Babes in Christ will grow providing they are fed the Word and its truths on a newborn level and gradually incorporating solid food to the babes in Christ grows. This is achieved through daily Bible reading and meditating on the Word while being fed the Word by sound doctrinal teachers and lastly by hearing the preached Word from God's preachers.

This brings several questions to mind, Are you a newborn babe in Christ or a youth, adolescence, or an adult? Do you desire regular feeding of the Word? Does it sound like music to your ear? From youth to adulthood can you witness Christ to others? Our lifestyles tell the world where we are in Christ—if in Christ then what stage we are in.

Regeneration – new birth then growth.

Believe and Be Healed: Mark 9:23-24

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

Today's discussion takes place with Jesus healing a demonic boy of his demon possessed soul. See, the father had done all he knew to do in trying to remove the demons from his son, but nothing worked, but when the father saw Jesus he pleaded for compassion and Jesus moved. A conversation pursued and Jesus wanted to know if he could believe, then all things were possible. Verse 24c provides the answer, which is "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

What does this mean? It means that the father wanted healing for his son, but it appears as though faith was lacking and Jesus knew this and the father recognized he had a faith problem. ***But glory to God***, the father humbled himself before the Savior to ask for help for his unbelief. Therefore, in essence, Jesus healed both the father and the son.

What does this say for humanity today? If there is a problem take it to Jesus in prayer while having the faith that He hears, and God will heal if we supply the faith. More importantly, humility is the key to our faith as it allows us to confess and then ask for help. This story shows Jesus' compassion which remains today for all who believe.

Jesus is the master healer.

Do Not Forsake the True God: Judges 2:10-12

And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

This topical discussion depicts the cycle of Israel's spiritual decline as this was a new generation of Israelites who had forgotten their father's deliverance from Egypt. This new generation was doing all manner of evil in the sight of God; they were worshipping idols gods, Baal and Ashtaroath. The Baal worship included cult, prostitution, and child sacrificing and this was in total violation of God's moral laws.

God had given specific instruction to the nation of Israel to destroy the inhabitant of the land (Canaan) before occupying, but did they? God gave these instructions because He knew what the outcome would be as stated in our scripture text if Israel allowed the Canaanites and the others to remain.

Just as God forbade the sinful Canaanites nation to continue in sin, He punished Israel for her sins (vv 14-15). He will do the same for all humanity today. When Israel followed God they were blessed, when modern day society follow God we are blessed; when God is forsaken curses follow. The lesson to be learned from this story is obedience is better than sacrifice; Worship God and enjoy His blessing.

God the creator is worthy of worship.

Christians Glow as the Brightness of The Sun Judges 5:31B

...But let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

What does it mean for Christians to glow as the sun? Christians have the love of God in our hearts so in this sin darken world we are to manifest His love in our lifestyles. Thus we will bring forth light in our witness, living for God and loving Him and others as commanded. As noted in our scripture verse all who love the Lord and follow God will glow as His glory shines upon and through all who believe.

The sun is the brightest in the universe and its radiant heat warms and lights the whole earth. Whenever there is a solar eclipse the whole earth is dark. Therefore, just as the sun lights and warms the earth Christians are to light the way for all unbelievers as well as warm their hearts with the Word of God.

Final thought, would you light a candle and then cover it? If so what would be the purpose of lighting the candle? No one will be able to see the light. Therefore, all who are in Christ are to let their “light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father, which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Christians light the way for others as God lights the way for you and the sun is l

No Impossibilities With God: Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

What is the meaning of his verse? This verse means that it is Christ's power and grace that enables us to do all that is required. Paul reminds us that in his weakness he was strong because he relied on the strength of Christ as should all believers as Christ is the source of our strength. Moreover, man can do nothing in and of his or herself. It is noteworthy to mention that God is the source of our being from beginning to end. With that being said then it stands to reason that God would not ask us to do something and withhold the strength to accomplish the requested task. Case in point, when God calls a preacher to preach he is equipped with what to say and how to say it; the same is true for all believers called to serve in the body of Christ. Believers who see impossibility is due to a lack of or weak faith. Believers are to supply the faith and God will supply the strength.

Reflect on Peter and John and their faith to heal the beggar man; the man was healed through the power of God and faith was supplied by Peter, John and the beggar man. He was told to get up and walk, and he walked. **What faith?**

If you believe that God has all power then there are no impossibilities in God. Why? Because He is the creator and sustainer of all that exist.

What is impossible with man is possible with God.

**The Meaning Of The Great Commandment
Matthew 22:34-40**

Jesus said unto him, Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all their mind. This is the first and great commandment.

Why would God make this commandment the greatest of all the commandments? God made such stipulation because He asks all believers who have accepted Christ and His salvation has done so out of devoted love. Also, God wants a fellowship with His people (believers), and in obedience to this commandment, the believer and God has a vertical relationship that cannot be broken.

If the question were raised how are we to know God's commandments or what He requires of us? To know God's commandments is through the daily study and meditation of His Word and yield to the interpretative power of the Holy Spirit for understanding. Then we are to hide these words in our hearts because what's in the heart is manifested in our daily lives. A heart for God leads to a desire for a better understanding of His Word and developing a fellowship with Him. The heart is the center of all feelings, as we pray with our heart, we feel, we love, we have a humble heart, and we have a repentant heart. Therefore, it's understood why God requires everything to stem from the heart because when actions stem from the heart sincerity is assured. Lastly, when love and a repentant heart are the focal point of our actions then understanding and obedience takes place.

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Therefore, by understanding this commandment several factors are on display and they are: (1) the believer is responding in love, gratitude, and complete loyalty to God because He first loved us as recorded in John 1:1 and 3:16 and what He has done for all mankind. (2) The believer will come to know God and enjoy the covenant relationship with God as He desires. (3) Believers must have a blind faith in God and a complete trust in Him as demonstrated in a father-child like relationship. (4) The believer's faithfulness to God and His commandments expresses believers' committed to Him as this commitment is possible with the aid of the Holy Spirit. (5) Being commitment to obeying this commandment displays the believer's heart as it expresses the believer's dedication to God's righteous standards. (6) As the believer's relationship grows stronger with God, we then desire to be in His presence constantly. (7) Lastly, believers who have totally committed one self to God and obeying the great command then can and do obey the other commandments. More importantly, believers who are in obedience to this commandment will understand and adhere to God's requirement of "Thou shall have no other gods before me." Because believers realize that the God of all creation is the one and true God (Exodus 20:3).

Conclusion, once a vertical relationship has been established with God, then we can establish a relationship with others as God commanded in the second commandment of "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (v 39).

The greatest commandment means loving God with our total being. How do you love God?

A Faith Test: Judges 6:36-40

Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

In today's discussion we find Gideon's faith required strengthening as do all believers on occasions. God in His love, grace and care for His children doesn't mind His children asking Him to strengthen their faith. Believers who are filled with the Spirit may on occasion find themselves faced with uncertainty, discouragement and disbelief as we face many difficult situations. When we encounter these circumstances, God stands ready to encourage and strengthen our faith (vv 38-40).

Given the light of Israel's sinful condition and God choosing Gideon to lead them back to God is understandable why Gideon needed assurances that God was with him. It is noteworthy to mention that when God chooses us for an assignment, He has equipped us to be successful because His Spirit fills us so we can go forth in confidence of being successful.

The question now becomes, in your God given assignment, do you require a test before acting in faith? Do you trust God's Word when He says "I will never forsake nor leave you?" "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). How is your faith walk? ***Step out in faith, God's got your back.***

Follow God's Leader As He Follows God Judges 7:17

And He said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.

This lesson fast forward to where Gideon is getting ready to wage war against the Midianites and Amalekites as there were so many of them until the Bible refers to their number as “being like grasshoppers (v.12).” The number is of no value when God is in the plan and His leader follows His instructions. As this was the case with Gideon. You know the story where Gideon began with thirty thousand men and God reduced the number to three hundred men and Gideon was victorious because of his faith and trust in God.

Some lessons to be learned from this chapter is that God's way and our way is different and what we think is the way to victory is all wrong, but victory is assured when we follow God. Also, when God gives us a leader, we are to follow him as he follows God because God is directing his path. There are many notable biblical characters that walked closely with God in delivering His people as there are many pastors today who are following God as they preach and teach “what thus saith the Lord.”

God's leaders were chosen by Him and as he walks with God, ye do likewise.

The Battle At Jericho: Joshua 5:14-15; 6:20

So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

The battle at Jericho is a familiar event in biblical history one that depicts faith and obedience to the Lord. Jericho was thought to be invincible because of its size, the thickness of its walls and the city was protected by the Canaanites gods. The capture of Jericho proved that Israel's God was far superior to that of the Canaanites gods.

God's strategy for winning this war was designed to test Joshua's faith and obedience as He was instructed to march around the city six days and have seven priests equipped with trumpets of rams horn and they were to march around the city as well. On the seventh day when the trumpets were sounded the people were to shout with a loud shout, which they did and the wall fell down.

Verses 14-15 tell of God's heavenly army informing Joshua of their readiness to fight his battle at Jericho as they would be unseen along-side the people of Israel. This assures all believers of our spiritual forces that are on our side to fight against the evil forces that attack us.

The Holy Spirit is our helper

Build Your Faith on God's Truth: Jude 20-21

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.

How do believers build their faith on God's truth? Believers can build their faith by knowing God's Word through daily Bible reading and meditating on the word. When believers meditate on God's Word His truths will be revealed to the believer. Then as believers begin to live the word new insight and knowledge is gained because the word becomes more meaningful.

Another method of building faith is through daily prayer as believers are to have a constant prayer life, as this is the believer's communication with God. The question now becomes, how do we pray? Believers are to pray in the Spirit which allows the Spirit to inspire, guide, sustain and even fight our battles against spiritual evil forces that come against the believer. It is noteworthy to say that when believers pray in the spirit the Holy Spirit who intercedes for the believer, as His intercessions are "with groaning which cannot be uttered" (Roman 8:26). The Holy Spirit intercedes within the believer here on earth as He lives in each believer, and Christ intercedes for the believer in heaven. Also, the Holy Spirit goes to the Father on behalf of the believer according to his/her needs and all in accordance to the Will of God (v 27).

Believers who build faith do it on the Word of God and its truth.

Pay What Is Due: Matthew 22:21; Malachi 3:10

...Render therefore unto Cesar the things what are Cesar's and unto God the things that are God's.

These are familiar passages of scripture which deal with paying tithes and taxes. This scripture takes place with the Pharisees posing the tax paying question to Jesus. Cesar represented the government and a certain amount of taxes were due as with us today. Jesus answered their question by stating "what is due to Cesar pay it and what's due God pay it" (tithes).

Malachi 3:10 encourages all to "bring all ye (your) tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith" the Lord asks us to prove Him true to His Word that He would open up the windows of heaven that there would be no room to receive the blessing that He will give. Failing to pay God what is already His is a faith and trust issue. When you have a bill that is in shutoff status, but the only money you have is what's due to God, what do you do? Trust God's Word and pay your tithes because He said "I will supply all your needs according to my riches and glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Closing point, God does not expect you to give Him what He hasn't first given you. Lastly, you can do more with ninety cents and God than with one dollar without God. ***Which is more?***

And God Said: Isaiah 45:5

“I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me: I girded thee though thou hast not known me.”

The setting for this topical discussion is that King Cyrus was anointed by God for the purpose of releasing the nation of Israel from captivity as Babylon was conquered by Cyrus in 539 and shortly thereafter the king issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland. The record is that the returning Jews began the task of rebuilding the temple. Cyrus did not worship God, but God used him for His divine purposes. This gives credence to the fact that God uses whomever He pleases.

In our scripture verse God reminds Israel who He is and that He is the only God in the universe. Additionally, God tells Israel what He has done for them without them recognizing or knowing Him. God tells Israel I am the one who created light and darkness, and that He makes peace. This brings questions to mind, observing creation, who would forget God or surmise that there is no God? Who would worship any other God except the God of creation or the God who provides salvation for all humanity? Lastly, is man so forgetful that it requires God to say “I am the Lord, and there is none else?”

Remember God and who He is.

A Growing Faith: II Thessalonians 1:1-5; 2:2

... We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Today's topical discussion will begin the first of a two day discussion on faith and spiritual growth. Today we will focus on Christian's faith growth using the church at Thessalonica as a model. The church at Thessalonica was facing stiff persecution, trials and tribulation, and false teachers. Therefore, Paul and his comrades sent words of encouragement to the church. In his letter, Paul assured the believers at Thessalonica that they would be vindicated by God in The Great Tribulation and it was their duty to remain steadfast in the truth and discard any and all false doctrines.

Verse 2 gives us two events that are sure to occur and will surely test all believers' faith. Those two events are (1) there will be a "falling away" from the church, and (2) the "man of sin" will be revealed (v 3) and he is known as the antichrist. Believers are encouraged to hold fast to their faith in the Lord as He is in control of every situation and He will protect His people.

Hebrews chapter 11 deals with faith and gives a profound definition of faith as it demonstrates that all believers are to hold fast to their faith as God promises to see them through regardless of the situation. Steadfast faith in Jesus Christ leads to several realities and they are (a) righteousness in Christ, (b) seeking God, (c) believe in His

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goodness, (d) have confidence in His Word, (e) obedience to His commands, (f) the believers life is regulated on God's promises, (g) believers will reject the evils of this world, (h) believers will seek our heavenly home, (i) believers will persevere in times of tests and persecution, (j) refute the pleasures of sin, and (k) believers who are willing to suffer for God's Word and not be willing or tempted to return to what the Bible calls their old country, which was their sinful nature. With that being said, when believers fully understand the true meaning of faith and that all things happen in the spirit realm before physical manifestation then believers can and will grow in their faith; as this is what God desires because then the believer can and trust God totally.

Hebrews 11:4-7 provides us with heroes of faith as their belief and trust in God earned them a star on the heroes' walk of fame. Let's look at Noah and his faith in God, God told Noah it was going to rain and for him to build an ark. Noah began building the ark despite the ridicule from the people. No doubt Noah's reputation was damaged when it took 120 years before the rain came, but when the rain began everyone wanted Noah to save them from the rain, but it was too late as God was pronouncing judgment on sin. Because of Noah's faith in God, his household was saved.

Have faith and grow in God's grace.

Gratitude For Spiritual Growth: II Thessalonians 1:3

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith growth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth;

Today's discussion is a continuation on faith and spiritual growth. This letter is sent to the Christians at Thessalonica from Paul, as he, Silvanus and Timotheus were providing encouragement to the Thessalonians' believers for their persevering faith in Jesus Christ as they faced many persecutions and trials (v 4). The Christians of Thessalonica persevered with the belief that the righteous judge, God would give their persecutors their just retributions in His own time (vv 5-9).

The question now becomes when will this retribution take place? God will begin His retribution at the beginning of The Great Tribulation (Revelation 6); according to verses 6-9 the complete retribution will come upon Christ's return to earth and all faithful believers will be openly and eternally vindicated for their faithfulness in Christ (Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9-17).

What does this say about our spiritual growth? It says thanks to the Holy Spirit for giving believers the strength to persevere in faith with a firm conviction that Christ will reward all those who remain faithful to Him. Believers grow spiritually by having a close fellowship with the Lord and yielding to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

God, thank You for Your indwelling Spirit.

Tuesday October 27

Strengthened By God's Hand: Ezra 7: 6, 10, 28B

And hath extended mercy unto before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me,

The setting for today's lesson study occurs during the second return of the exiles from Persia to Jerusalem under Ezra's leadership while chapters 9-10 deals with the spiritual revival or reform that Ezra instituted after his arrival in Jerusalem. This speaks to his belief in God. Furthermore, in this chapter we find the phrase "the hand of the Lord was upon me" being stated three times which give rise to Ezra's devotion to the Lord in the following:

(a) Studying God's Word, as this enabled Ezra to know God's ways and thoughts as it pertained to life, and God's people.

(b) Practicing God's Word gave Ezra the heart to obey God's Word, His commandment and righteous standards.

(c) Teaching God's Word to others. It wasn't enough to know God's Word for himself, as he was diligent in sharing with others God's Word, standards and morals. This was so the people could persevere in righteousness.

It says that Ezra wasn't satisfied in knowing God for himself, but set the example for all believers in our witness and soul winning for God. Ezra had a firm conviction that God's hand of strength was with him as he dedicated himself to fulfilling God's calling for him.

Devotion to God brings strength from God.

The Mercy Seat Of God: Exodus 25:17-22; 26:34

And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: tow cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat....

What is the mercy seat? It was the lid for the ark on which the high priest sprinkles the shed blood of sacrificial offerings for the atonement for sins committed the year before. The act of sprinkling blood as atonement was symbolic of God's forgiving (Leviticus 16:14-15; 17:11) mercy as it foreshadowed the coming of Christ to atone for the sins of the world (Romans 3:21-25; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:26).

The ark is the chest containing the Ten Commandments (vv 16:22), the manna (16:33-34), and Aaron's staff (Numbers 17:10; Hebrews 9:4). The ark itself was placed in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle (26:34) which is referred to as the throne of God, which served as a reminder of Israel's exodus and their covenant of the Lord (Deuteronomy 10:8).

The tabernacle served as a sanctuary or a place set apart for God and His people to meet. We see the glory of God over the tabernacle both day and night, and when God's glory moved, the nation of Israel moved. This is how God guided Israel during their wilderness journey (Exodus 40:36-38). The tabernacle is symbolic of the physical body as all believers are the dwelling place for God, the Holy Spirit.

His mercy is seen in Jesus' blood.

Instructions For Righteous Living: Proverbs 15:1-33

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

Today's lesson is the first in a two-day series on righteous living as opposed to those of the wicked and the results of each. Verse 1 sets the tone how a righteous person speaks, because when speaking in a soft reconciliatory voice it speaks peace and reconciliation as this person represents the peace of God. While on the other hand harsh words provoke anger and hostility and this is not the way of God and His people.

Verse 6 talks about the spiritual richness of the righteous household as opposed to the wicked household that contains a plethora of earthly riches as well as strife and confusion. Also, the wicked do not see the value in living for God and his righteous is devoted to earthly pleasures while the upright strives to follow God and His righteousness knowing that God owns everything and the upright most prominent richness is to one day see his Saviour face-to-face and spend eternity with God.

Lastly, the righteous seeks more knowledge of God while developing a close communion with Him and displaying a reverential fear of the Lord. While the wicked seeks counsel in his own understanding as Proverbs 3:5 advises against such actions.

Adhere to godly instructions and enjoy the blessings of righteous living.

Blessings of Righteous Living: Proverbs 10:2-11

Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

Our scripture text is a second in taking a comparative look at righteous living and the blessings that follow. Our opening verses clearly state the benefits of living for God and living out of the safety of God's protection. The wicked have nothing to look forward to but what he/she has accomplished, whereas the righteous will not see death; as death in this instance is eternal.

Verse 3 offers another blessing that the righteous person is assured of, which are the divine providence and protection from God. It matters not the need whether it is physical, economic, or social condition, God is always there as He states in His Word "He will never leave nor forsake His own."

Verse 5 speaks of the person who sleepeth in the harvest (harvest souls for Christ), which is the time for believers to witness Christ to others, but is lazy in their efforts and are constantly putting off winning souls for Christ. Verse 11 brings the point home of the smart believer who is seen as "a well of life" as he/she is in the vineyard winning souls for Christ. This is because these kinds of believers know and are following God's way that leads others to Him.

Live right and be blessed---bless others.

Friday October 31

The Lord is Gracious: Psalm 145:8

The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

What does it mean to be gracious? Our scripture verse provides a definition for the word gracious which is compassion, merciful and is slow to anger. Upon conferring with the dictionary, it provides the same definition for gracious.

The remainder of this number of Psalm talks of God's graciousness in all that He does. Verse 9 speaks of God's "tender mercies are over all his works." This peak volume for all creations and the heavenly bodies that perform on schedule as God has commanded. More importantly, we witness the tender mercies of God toward all mankind as He loves man unconditionally, and what God asks in return is for this love to be returned. Case in point, when man sinned and the fellowship was broken between God and man, God provided a way to restore this fellowship. God gave the very best that He had, which was His Son Jesus Christ who gave His life on the cross for man's sins.

Also, this speaks volumes for God's love and compassion for man and his lostness; God and his mercy refused to allow man to remain in a state of lostness; whereas justice demanded man to remain lost. Lastly, when man calls upon the Lord in sincere prayer and a repentant heart God hears and answers and provides deliverance from the problem.

The graciousness of God!

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Author's Comments

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