

## FAITHFUL TO THE FAITH

In our last message we mentioned the topic of **The Faith**. It is the body of foundational truths that God wants us to believe. The faith that God provides us for our salvation is **Saving Faith** or **Justifying Faith**. this is one of the first Bible verses I memorized as a young boy.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. - Ephesians 2:8-9*

*Therefore, since since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. - Romans 5:1-2 NIV*

**Grace is God's acceptance of us.  
Faith is our acceptance of God accepting us.  
You are not saved by the plan of salvation.  
You are saved by the man of salvation. - Adrian Rogers**

Our relationship with Father God begins **by grace through faith**. We gain access to His favor and kingdom which is a foretaste of the fullness of His glory when Jesus returns to earth.

{Just as I finished writing the above sentence, a friend dropped by here in Florida. As he opened his car trunk, I noticed he had a narrow box package. I said to him, 'Is that from Jesus Express?' After he came into my house, he said that the package was not from him but from Jesus. In the package was a brand new HP laptop computer!

I had been thinking the past weeks that I needed a new computer as mine was very slow and somewhat outdated. This will be a great blessing for my writing ministry. Praise God!

What a nice surprise a day after our national Thanksgiving day / Nov. 25, 2022.}

My friend relayed the fact that he recently prayed for a guy who had two large kidney stones. He prayed for him and the next day when a scan was taken, the stones were gone! My friend lives a generous grace filled life!

**The Faith** gives us a firm foundation upon which we live the rest of our life of **Living by Faith**. When we later look at some of the Heroes of Faith in Hebrews 11, we will see a common theme in their lives.....**they trusted God**. True faith is not just to believe that God exists, but it **believes God, that He is a rewarder** of those who **diligently** seek Him. - Hebrews 11:6. In a later message on Hebrews 11, we will see how some needed **faith to escape** harm, while others needed **faith to endure** trials. The Christian's daily life is meant to be lived the same way they entered into it.....**by grace through faith**. (for a full teaching on grace, go to our section on Jesus on our website.) God has provisions, miracles, healing, spiritual blessings etc. for us, not based on our works or efforts but on His grace. We ask, receive by faith and thank Him even before we even see the manifestation. - Philippians 4:6.

*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. - Colossians 2:6-7 NIV*

We saw in our last message that God created the universe and all that is in it with His spoken Word - Hebrews 11:2, Colossians 2:6-7. In the early chapters of Genesis, God sees no need to prove His existence but simply reveals Himself as creator of all that exists. However, the creation and the Word of God give powerful testimony. - Psalm 19. Mankind is without excuse for God has made it plain - Romans 1:19.

*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. - Romans 1:20 NIV*

For 2000 years the devil has sought to undermine the Christian faith through a myriad of lies, evils and false belief systems. Neither science nor archaeology have ever contradicted the Bible, but scientists and skeptics have.

The Bible is not primarily a science book. It is not written to tell us how the heavens go, it is written to tell us how to go to heaven. But when it speaks of science, it is accurate. Men study science as god, not the God of the science. - Adrian Rogers

God is a creator and builder while Satan is a counterfeiter and destroyer. He seeks to undermine all that God is and does. How do you destroy a family or a society and its institutions? You attack its foundations and structures. It can be done covertly and gradually, just as termites can slowly eat away the supports of a house. Here are some contrasts between God and His purposes and the devil's termites.

God / **atheism, paganism humanism** Creation / **evolution**

Male and Female / **gender confusion** Be fruitful and multiply / **abortion**

Fill the earth / **depopulation** Worship Creator God / **worship Mother earth and creation**

Just Laws / **Lawless** Liberty / **Tyranny** Life / **death** Holy Spirit / **evil spirits**

Jesus faced opposition from many sources during his public life. His church would face opposition too, both from without and from within. Throughout the centuries, God has always had his faithful servants who have stood firm for Christ Jesus and the church that He founded. We have already listed some N.T. examples in another message. We should mention a few from history too.

**Persecution at the Church** Until the 4th century. Christians suffered much persecution from the Roman Emperors, but it grew mightily in strength and numbers as the church stood firm in the faith.

*'We are of yesterday , yet we have filled your Empire, your Cities, your Towns, your Islands, your Tribes, your Camps, Castles, Palaces, Assemblies and Senate. - Tertullian (A.D. 160-220)*

Christian graves in the Catacombs are estimated between 2 to 7 million. By the end of the Imperial Persecutions (A.D. 313) Christians numbered about half of the Roman Empire.

- Halley's Bible Handbook

**Paganism in the Church** In the early 4th century, Emperor Constantine issued an Edict of Toleration (318 A.D.) which allowed Christians to freely choose their religion. Church buildings sprang up with this new found freedom as the government showed great favor to them in many ways. Since its inception, Christianity had infiltrated the mighty Roman Empire which had ruled through fear, force and their military might. Christians had operated with love, faith, boldness and the power of the message of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. However, a dramatic change took place in the late 4th century with the reign of Emperor Theodosius (A.D. 378-398). 'He made Christianity the State Religion of the Roman Empire and made church membership mandatory. **This was the worst calamity that has ever befallen the church.** This forced conversion filled the churches with unregenerate people. Not only so, he undertook the forcible suppression of all other religions and prohibited idol worship. Under his decrees, heathen temples were torn down by mobs of Christians, and there was much bloodshed.

Christ had designed to conquer by purely spiritual and moral means. Up to this time, conversion was voluntary, a genuine change in heart and life. But now, the military spirit of Imperial Rome had entered the Church. The Church had conquered the Roman Empire, but in reality the Roman Empire had conquered the Church, by making the Church over into the image of the Roman Empire. The Church had changed in nature and had entered its **great apostasy** and had become **political organization** in the spirit and pattern of Imperial Rome, and took its nose-dive into the millennium of Papal abominations. In its ambition to rule it lost and forgot the Spirit of Christ.'

- Halley's Bible Handbook (Church History section)

The early church was a living organism marked by apostolic teaching, simplicity in worship and loving close knit fellowship in homes where all believers were ministers, learning to depend on Christ, one another and the Word of God as their primary authority.

Now it had become an organization with elaborate buildings and ceremonies, a top down hierarchy of priests, rituals and where there was more dependence on the Church rather than on Christ. Money and power were in dominance along with sexual abuse. This sad state of the Church continued for the next 1000 years known as the Dark Ages. Nonetheless, God always has His lights in the Church whom He uses to expose error and corruption.

God used the following Reformers to address some issues in the Catholic church, but by no means were they perfect in their character and actions, for God uses imperfect vessels. We should honor them for their contributions to the cause of Christ, but also learn from their mistakes and flaws.

John Wycliffe - 'The Bible Translator' who translated the Bible from Latin into English was martyred for the noble work to put the Bible into the hands of the people.

John Hus - 'The Father of Reform' who longed to spread the good news of Christ and urged the people to search the Scriptures. He was burned at the stake for criticizing the church practice of selling indulgences.

Martin Luther - 'The Battle Ax of Reform' who proclaimed that man is saved by grace not works.

John Calvin - 'The Teaching Apostle' who organized the church and urged people to serve God in all areas of life and culture. He emphasized the sovereignty of God.

John Knox - 'The Sword Bearer' from Scotland who battled queens to gain the right to preach boldly. He was feared due to his powerful prayer life.