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Faith is For Living

This morning I'm going to share some things having to do with faith. A couple years ago I did a seven part series on "The Faith of the Son of God". It was at that time the Lord was really beginning to open my eyes to the reality and purpose of faith. Like all things when you see them in the light of Life, faith turned out to be something completely different than what I had previously thought. I might review a bit of that this morning. But I wanted to speak specifically this morning on the reality that *faith is for living*. That's the reality that the Lord has been causing me to know.

Faith isn't about believing. Faith is about living. Faith is not primarily for getting things. Faith is not for believing things. Faith is for living. In other words, true faith brings forth Life. His life. Evidenced in and through you. True faith becomes the substance and evidence of His life in and through us. The evidence and substantiation of what is unseen. Maybe you recognize that to be Hebrews 11:1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen". You could say that this way – "faith becomes the evidence and substance of His unseen life working in you".

Here's another Scripture - "The just will live by faith". That is a prophetic statement made by Habakkuk, fulfilled by our salvation in Christ, and quoted several times in the New Testament. You'll notice that it doesn't say "the just will get stuff by faith" or "the just will live by belief", and it doesn't say "the just will live according to what they believe". It says "the just will live by faith". Faith is for living.

Maybe you don't see a distinction there. I hope you will before we're finished today. Lets start just by defining faith. Faith is not what you believe. Faith isn't your mind believing in a thing, or trying to get yourself to believe a thing. Faith is not anything the natural mind has or does. Faith is His mind working in you. Faith is the beholding and knowing of all that God beholds and knows, and the life that subsequently comes out from that knowing is the eternal life of God. That life is in you by new birth, but it is accessed by faith.

You see its one thing to believe THAT Christ is in you, and to believe THAT Christ is your life, and to believe THAT there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. It is another thing altogether to come to faith in regards to all of that. **Faith isn't your belief in a thing. Faith is the reality of that thing in full view by the revealing of the Spirit.** And life flows out of that. Faith is for living. "The life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." We live by faith. We walk by faith.

It is possible for you and I to believe in all the right things and never come to faith, and therefore never come to true transformation. Everything you believe in and agree with and try to live by is still something that you are trying to do until you come to faith. Faith is where you are changed. Faith is where grace is accessed, and grace begins to work in and through you. Here's another verse that has been

opening up to me lately - Romans 5:2, it is by faith that we access this grace in which we stand.

Friends, you and I who are born again stand in the grace of God. We stand in the fullness of all that God could have and did give the human soul in the person of Christ. Grace has to do with where we are, who we are, what He's done, and how God sees us. And still we can believe in grace, write a book about grace, and agree with grace...and yet never really experience or access much of grace, because grace is accessed by faith.

All of my *believing in* grace never did much more than make me glad. It made me thankful. But *faith in* grace has started to let me live. Faith has accessed the grace that I've always believed in. Faith has experienced, known, and lived out the grace that I've heard about ever since Sunday School.

I'm trying to talk about faith and realizing that I have to define grace. When I speak of grace I'm not referring to God putting up with you because Jesus died. No, grace isn't God letting you live. Grace is God letting you die. Grace is God letting you die with Christ to the old man and the old creation. "I've been crucified with Christ". "I've been baptized into His death". Grace lets you die so that Christ can be your resurrection and life out from among the dead.

To those who will accept this death, to the dead who will hear his voice, He offers Himself as the resurrection. "I am the resurrection and the life." Grace is everything that God Almighty could and did give the human soul through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The grace of God is the gift of a death you couldn't die, unto a life you couldn't live. The newness of His life. Both this death and this life are yours by grace.

How about that for a Christmas present? Hey, what's in that package? Death. Why would I want that? You would if you knew what you were dying to. Dying to death. Dying to Adam and his kind. Dying to a world which man has never been able to repair simply because we're the problem with it. How about death to death? Unto what? Unto resurrection. That's grace.

Where does faith come in? Faith is how you come to see and access and abide in and live by grace.

So faith is a spiritual view, comprehension, knowledge, consciousness, a knowing and awareness of all that is eternal and real in Christ according to the finished work of the cross. It is really the same thing as spiritual understanding if you know that spiritual understanding is the Spirit's understanding of all things.

Having spiritual understanding is not the same thing as having the Spirit. The Spirit is in you so that you might grow up in spiritual understanding, that you may grow in what the Spirit knows and sees. In other words, that you might grow in faith. Faith is the mind of Christ working in you.

Faith is not my belief in or understanding of spiritual things. Faith is the understanding of the Spirit working in me. It is the very Spirit Himself working in me according to His understanding – causing me to know and abide in the truth and live as Christ's body in the earth.

But that is far from what many think faith is. Most think that faith is whatever I believe about God. Faith is whatever I believe about heaven and hell. Somebody says "do you believe in God?". Yes, I do. "Wow, that takes faith". No, that doesn't take faith. That just takes a brain. That just takes looking at one sunset, or one red blood cell under a microscope.

So you can believe whatever you want to believe about spiritual things, but what you have is still your thoughts, your beliefs, your understanding of those things. You haven't come to faith until you've come to something of God's view and thought about spiritual reality. Until you've come to the faith of the Son of God.

Faith is entirely supernatural. I don't like to use that word sometimes because of some connotations that often go with it, but it's a good word. Faith is super, that is "beyond", the natural. Faith is entirely supernatural. It is never something you do. It is something you have when Christ is revealed. You can sit in a room with a Bible for 25 years and decide that you're going to become a person of faith, and unless the Spirit of God works faith in your heart by the opening of your eyes, you're not going to become anything other than a religious person. And a lot of good that will do you. True faith is something the Spirit of God is allowed to work in you. Faith grants you His eyes, and makes you His body.

Faith is entirely supernatural. It's his thoughts, his mind, his comprehension of all things. It is God's awareness and understanding of spiritual reality. My understanding of spiritual things is simply that – its **my** understanding of spiritual things. But faith is the Spirit of God working in my soul according to His understanding. And when you've tasted faith, you know it's far more than what you believe or think or agree with.

I think that we realize that when we are born again, but then quickly forget. You know, when you were born again it's not like you suddenly just decided to agree with the Christian religion. At least I hope not. No, there was something of a sudden and strange knowing and beholding as if you were seeing something that was both concrete and yet not material. There was an awareness, a consciousness of reality that was almost like you were borrowing, for a moment, God's mind. You borrowed His view. You saw what He saw. You knew it was truth. You saw yourself helpless. A sinner. You saw yourself from His view. You saw Him to be all that you need. And you turned your heart. Faith saw what was real. Faith shared His view of reality, accepted it as Truth, and turned. You were born again by faith, not just by believing something.

Sure, faith wasn't something you decided to do that day. Faith was something you allowed Him to work in you. Your part was to turn like a little child. His part was the faith – the sharing of His view, unto your conviction, unto your conversion.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God,

That's how you were born again. You allowed Him to show you your need and His provision. It wasn't your conclusion after some study. It was His awareness granted to your soul. Faith – the mind of Christ working in you.

And so, I believe that most Christians are aware of something like this at new birth, but somehow we forget about that experience. Somehow we forget about the

otherness of that mind, those thoughts that suddenly flooded our awareness. The thoughts that seemed to be so contrary to the world.

Isa 55:8 For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways, says Jehovah. 9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Its like we forget that faith was a whole other Mind working in us, and we go on to believe that growing in faith is a matter of Scripture memorization or Church dedication or theological training. Well, faith is always faith. It doesn't change. It is always God's awareness, view, reality, thought, WORD, being revealed in your heart as you continually seek to know.

And Christ is the Word of God's understanding. Christ the wisdom of God. Christ the Word of God. Now you've read that. "When the Spirit is come He will take the things of mine and reveal it to you." "He will show you the things that have been freely given to you by God."

The Spirit gives faith. He causes you to know the understanding of God, which is Christ. Everything of God is understood in Christ. Everything of God is said and communicated in Christ. Everything of God is finished in Christ, revealed in Christ, comprehended in Christ. Christ the Word of God. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God." No, that's not your study of the Bible. That's the hearing of the Word. "Let Him who has ears hear this word."

Faith causes you to know the Word of God – which is Christ. Faith causes you to know the purpose of God – which is Christ. Faith causes you to know the wisdom of God – which is Christ. Faith causes you to know the love of God – which is Christ. Faith causes you to know the life of God – which is Christ. The redemption of God - Christ. The salvation of God – Christ. The power of God – Christ. Christ is the sum total of everything that God is trying to show you. Faith is the seeing and knowing of Christ. Christ, God's thought and reality concerning everything.

Col 2:3 "in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Everything that God could have given you, He has given you in and as His Son. That is grace. And faith accesses this grace in which you stand. Faith sees it. Faith experiences it. Faith lives there.

Its always that way in the New Covenant. You'll find that all over the new testament. You'll see verses like:

Eph 3:13 For this reason I desire that you faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. 14 For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

"That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith". Wait a minute, I thought that Paul was writing this letter to the church! Isn't Christ already in their heart? Yes, but He dwells there, that is lives there, rules there, manifests Himself there only by faith.

You'll find in Galatians 5:5 that it is by faith that we bring forth the righteousness of God. Wait, I thought that "Christ was made unto me righteousness." I thought that "I was the righteousness of God in Christ." Yes, all true. But righteousness works out of you by faith.

You'll find in Galatians 5:6, Ephesians 3:17, 2 Thes 1:3, 1 Tim 1:5 that faith is how the love of God works in and through us. I thought I already received the love of God. Yes, but by faith it is made manifest. By faith it is accessed. "Circumcision and uncircumcision avail nothing, only faith working out through love." "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and sincere faith".

Lets look for a minute at Romans 5:1 and 2.

Rom 5:1 Therefore being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through Him we **also** have *access by faith* into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the expectation of the glory of God.

What is this verse saying? First it is saying that by faith we have been justified. That is forgiven. Justified. Just as though you never sinned, because its just as though you never lived. Crucified with Christ. You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. That is peace. Peace with God. How? Through the Lord. The Lord is our peace. He Himself is our peace. Ephesians 2.

So, first of all here we have justification and peace with God. You can more or less relate this to new birth. It is the finished work of God that you come to immediately at new birth. But that is not necessarily the experience of this new life. It is not the access, the experience, the knowing, the manifestation of this new life.

It doesn't stop with justification. Its not just justification and peace with God that you have by faith. Read on. "Through Him we **ALSO** have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the expectation of the glory of God".

So, what does faith do? It gets you justified. Ok, granted. It gives you peace with God. Yes, yes. But also by faith, by the increase of faith, we access this unsearchable grace in which we have been made to stand. And we rejoice in something. Rejoice in what? We rejoice in the expectation that what is now in us will be experienced. We rejoice in the fact that the Christ that is now in us by new birth will dwell in us by faith. We rejoice in the fact that the righteousness that is in us will come forth by faith. The love of God will work in us and out of us by faith.

Having received grace, we now have this expectation. What's the expectation? That faith will access the grace in which we stand. That faith will work in me the very death of Christ. That faith will manifest through me the very life of Christ. The glory of God.

You see, that is what the prophet meant when he said "the just will live by faith". In other words "the justified ones will live by faith". He could have said "the just will be justified by faith". But its bigger than that. It goes beyond that. The just will live by faith.

Everything that is in you by death, burial, and resurrection, is accessed and lived out by faith. Again, "I've been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." That's a statement of fact. That's a statement of finished work.

The reality of salvation. But **then** he says "And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God". Now that's a statement of experience. That's a reality of living.

Now before we close I want to say something about what life is. What is this life that we live by faith? What does it look like? What does it feel like? What is the reality of it? I have to tell you that I have had all sorts of imaginations about living in and by the life of Christ. And I can see some people wrestling with some of that same confusions. So I wanted to just briefly address that for a minute.

First, let me say (because it is true) that often the body is not really growing in faith. We are growing in religion, or growing in theology or growing in discipline, but we're not growing in faith. And there is really no experience of life, there is just whatever we're doing for God and we call it life because we don't know better. That is certainly how it was with me for most of my life.

But on the other hand, sometimes people are growing in faith, growing in the truth, being conformed to His image and we're still wondering "where is the life?". You're still thinking "when am I going to experience this 'newness of life' thing" that I keep reading about. And a lot of that has to do with our imaginations about what that is and how it works.

Sometimes, though Christ is being revealed in us, we continue to carry around our own ideas about what growth is and what the manifestation of life looks like. We think its going to be a big outward thing. All of the sudden I start talking in King James English, stretch out a staff and part the neighbor's swimming pool or something. Or all of the sudden I just lay in bed and intercede all night for the orphans in Africa. My experience is that the life of God in the soul of man doesn't really line up with my carnal expectations, and yet it far exceeds them.

As with all things, in order to see the reality it is necessary to loosen your grip on the imagination. Life certainly transforms. Life is certainly real. But, speaking personally, the Lord dealt with me to let go of my preconceptions in order to understand it. I may never part my neighbor's swimming pool, but I have seen at least the beginnings of faith accessing grace.

What is the manifestation of Christ in you? What is the experience of life working in you? The manifestation of Christ is simply the measure of Christ released through you in something you say or don't say, do or don't do, feel or don't feel, want or don't want, etc.

You might say it this way: It is the measure to which your soul has been conformed to His indwelling life. And that is through any conceivable way that the reality of new life has found expression in you. Something you do or don't do, say or don't say, feel or don't feel. If Christ is the source and cause and reality of it, it is the manifestation of His life. And it is working in you by faith.

What do mean when you say "something you say or don't say? Well, the life of Christ in one instance works in you towards the sharing of truth with somebody. In another instance it constrains you to hold your tongue. Both are the fruit of His life. What do mean when you say "something you feel or don't feel". Well, in one instance it is like Paul saying "God is my witness how I long for you with the very affections of Jesus Christ". In another instance it is the absolute absence of fear or

anger that once resided there. Something you feel or don't feel. In both cases you have a manifestation of Christ.

I know the apostles went around for a while healing people and performing signs. But when Paul the apostle spoke of the manifestation of Christ, the fruit of Life working in Him, he mentioned things like "love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, and self-control". Obviously, I understand power and miracles in the earth to be another manifestation of Christ. But the greatest power and miracle is in the inward transformation of the human soul because that is an eternal work of God. The power that He has to subject all things to Himself.

Don't misunderstand or disdain this working, this conforming that is happening in you by growing in faith. It is real. It is fruit. It is Christ. And it is progressive. It is progressive as you grow in faith. As Christ, your life is revealed. It doesn't always change circumstances. But it changes you in all circumstances into the fragrance of Christ. You literally become 2 Corinthians 2:14, the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place.

I say that because sometimes we are so busy waiting for God to do some sign or wonder to tell us where we stand that we can't see life conforming our soul. Sometimes we're looking all over the old creation for our report card that we don't discern the One who is mightily working in us a change of nature.

Life works in you by faith. If you are growing in faith, I promise you that He is able to will and work in you for His good pleasure. Concern yourself with the faith that access grace. Let Him concern Himself with the ways in which He uses you as salt and light in the world. My finger concerns itself only with staying attached to my body and abiding in my life. It is the business of my head to make sure that finger accomplishes my will.

If my finger was paralyzed, my head would first concern itself with getting my finger healed so that it knows and experiences and flows with my life. Then the head would effortlessly use that finger for expression and purpose. Take that and apply it wherever it helps.