

The focus of our faith – Sunday 28th September, 2014

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Beloved in The Lord,

Faith has many enemies, that try to derail us from walking God’s path. To live life in a way that honours God is never easy, but it is always blessed. Faith, like a muscle needs to be exercised in order to grow. Faith needs to be constantly maintained, fed, and exercised. The Bible exhorts us to be strong in our faith and not to waver. We read in James:

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:2-8).

Wavering faith is of no use. Unfortunately wavering faith is what many Christian’s have. One day they are strong, the next day they are weak, racked with doubt and fear. One moment all is well, the next not so good. This is not how God desires for us to live. God wants us to have strong faith, not to waver, not to doubt, but to always trust in Him.

In order to have strong faith, we need to focus upon Jesus, we need to have our eyes fixed fairly and squarely on God at all times and in all places, in all circumstances. We need to focus intently on Jesus, on God’s Word.

Our text today says: **“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith,”..**

Herein lies the key to strong, unwavering faith. To have your eyes fixed upon Jesus. As soon as our focus shifts away from Jesus, we begin to waver in our faith. When we turn our gaze away from Him, then we open the door to doubt and fear.

This is why it is of utmost importance that we regularly read the Bible. When we read the Bible, we strengthen our faith. We discover that God is always faithful, that He knows all things, can do all things, is everywhere and is always in total and absolute control. We find that those who trust in God are never forsaken. There is not a single place in the Bible where we read that God wasn’t able to do something or keep a promise. He is God. God is always victorious and ultimately His children are victors – always – even in death! Paul said that we are more than conquerors if we trust in Jesus.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough the need for you to regularly read The Word of God. You cannot over do it! God's Word is Truth – The Truth. It is good nourishment for your whole being. It is life for your soul and spirit. It is the energy that energizes your faith. God's Word heals and strengthens and protects. Solomon put it this way:

“My son, give attention to my words;

Incline your ear to my sayings.

²¹ Do not let them depart from your sight;

Keep them in the midst of your heart.

²² For they are life to those who find them

And health to all their body.

²³ Watch over your heart with all diligence,

For from it flow the springs of life.

²⁴ Put away from you a deceitful mouth

And put devious speech far from you.

²⁵ Let your eyes look directly ahead

And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.

²⁶ Watch the path of your feet

And all your ways will be established.

²⁷ Do not turn to the right nor to the left;

Turn your foot from evil” (Proverbs 4:20-27).

You see, we are clearly told that God's Word is good medicine for our whole being. It is a fact that if our inner person is healthy, our outer person will be generally healthy also. Many many illnesses and diseases have their root in stress, anxiety, etc. It is very beneficial to take God's Spiritual Vitamins regularly. You should take them every day and as much as you can. Verse 21 says: ***“Do not let them depart from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart.”***

We need to keep God's Word in our line of vision all the time. If we do our faith will be strong and less prone to wavering. We waver when God's Word is not in our main line of vision. We waver when we rely on feelings, and not on what God says in His Word.

You must learn to rely on what God says and not on what you feel. There are days, sometimes weeks when I do not really feel God's presence, but that doesn't cause my faith to waver. God said through Jesus ***“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt.28:20b).***

In those times when I do not feel God nearby, when I do not feel His presence, I remind myself of this verse. I tell myself no matter what I feel, Jesus said that He is with me, and so I pray ***“Lord I thank you that You are with me always. I believe that no matter what I feel right now, You are here because Your Word says so. Thank you that You are with me.”*** Often by the end of this type of prayer, I begin to also feel His presence.

Paul writes:

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

⁵ We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,” (2 Cor.10:3-5).

We often need to take control of our thoughts, and make them come into line with what God has said in His Holy Word. We need to say: “God You said it, I believe it and that settles it!”

As we do our faith grows stronger and stronger. We need to be ruthless with our minds and we need to keep them under control, because that is where the Devil attacks. Our mind is the battlefield for spiritual ascendancy. Faith by definition is:

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith is assurance and conviction of things not seen. Faith is believing and trusting not in what you see, but in what God has said. Assurance and conviction are the pillars on which faith stands. Faith does not rely upon sight. We need to train our minds to trust what God has said. We need to train ourselves to focus on God always. We need to keep our focus on His Word all the time.

It is really helpful to not only to read God’s Word, but to make it our confession. Take God’s many promises and proclaim them, confess them. As you begin the day remind yourself that God is with you. As you go to sleep at night remind yourself that God is awake and watching over you. Throughout the day meditate, ponder, reflect, proclaim God’s Word. Fill your thoughts not with worldly things but with the things of God. Be filled with The Holy Spirit. Paul writes:

“See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. ¹⁶ Rejoice always; ¹⁷ pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit;” (1.Thes.5:15-19)

What Paul is writing here is that we need to always have our focus on God through Christ Jesus. We need to live every moment in His presence. As we do, our faith will grow and flourish and we will bear good fruit for God’s Kingdom. May God help us.

Amen

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.