

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

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18.6.16

We need to know God's Word. It is important to invest some quality time in the scriptures ... like The Bereans. All of us can choose to do this ... to become familiar with God's Word. No excuse not to allow time to study God's Word.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. We have to spend quality time in the Word of God.

Romans 10:13-15 (NKJV)

13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,

Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (FAITH COMES!! Equally ... It does not say, "faith comes by having heard")

We have not always succeeded have we? What is the reason?

1 Timothy 6:6-12 (NKJV)

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be **content**.

9 But those who desire (*crave*) to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

11 **But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.**

12 **Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.** *(If there is a fight ... there has to be enemies. It is a good fight ... because we should win! But ... it is a fight!)*

Today we are going to look at some enemies to faith ... counterfeits to faith. Don't confuse faith with feeling. That is very very common. We often walk by feeling ... "I don't think God hears my prayers anymore". "I don't feel like I'm a Christian anymore". "I don't feel God loves me anymore". Feelings have nothing to do with faith. Feelings come from our physical senses ... from our hormones. We can be affected by the weather. These things have nothing to do with faith. Faith is a decision to believe that what God says in His Word is true. Feelings can be an enemy of our faith.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NKJV)

7 **For we walk by faith, not by sight.**

We walk by faith ... not by our feelings. Our feelings don't affect the integrity of God in Heaven. His Word is true irrespective of our feelings. We don't have to change our faith. We stand our ground. We fight against any feelings to the contrary.

Another enemy we might be confusing faith with is mental ascent. An intellectual agreement with what the scriptures say. "I see the truth of scripture". That can be just "head knowledge". It's not deep down in our hearts.

For example. Does God heal? Yes. I see that in scripture. But ... does it become personal ... real ... or is it just head knowledge? Will God heal you? Well ... "I can see it in the scriptures".

Mark 11:22-24 (NKJV)

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.

The understanding has to get from our heads to our hearts. It has to be words living in us. You have to believe in your heart.

Romans 10:6-10 (NKJV)

6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above)

7 or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart (the Word of God in 2 places ... in the heart and in the mouth ... The "Heart and Mouth connection") that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart

one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

These verses are more than just agreement with the logic and rationale of the scriptures. Not just superficial agreement.

Hebrews 10:19-23 (NKJV)

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, (*a true heart ... a genuine heart*) 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.

Faith is more than mentally agreeing that the Bible is true. We need to live by faith ... not by mental ascent. True faith leads to action.

Our next hindrance is don't confuse real faith ... in the heart ... with dead faith.

James 1:19-25 (NKJV)

19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving (*deluding*) yourselves.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

25 **But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

Faith has to move from hearing to doing!

James 2:14-22 (NKJV)

14 **What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? (Where's the evidence?)**

15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,
16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," *(words, words, words ... pointless exercise ... like people who talk about faith but do nothing with it)* but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

17 Thus also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** *(There is a dead faith ... and a living faith)*

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?** *(Faith without corresponding actions is dead!)*

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

22 **Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?**

James is trying hard to say that there is something called dead faith. Real faith produces appropriate actions. It is very possible to have a dead faith.

Luke 6:46-49 (NKJV)

46 "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?

47 Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like:

48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

49 *(the alternative)* But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

Having just head knowledge ... mental ascent ... is similar to having a dead faith. A dead faith won't deliver.

Don't confess faith with presumptuousness. You won't receive by believing for something that you have no warrant ... no Promise from God ... no Word of God. Trying to force God to back your decision. He will back up our living faith ... He won't back up our presumptuousness. Look at the following verses for a parallel.

Jeremiah 7:1-15 (NKJV)

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

2 "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!' "

3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

4 **Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.'**
(That's our guarantee. We cannot be defeated! Wrong! Wrong! No warrant from God that this nation will be saved)

5 "For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour,
6 if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt,

7 then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

8 **"Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit.** *(Jeremiah 7:8 (NET) "But just look at you! You are putting your confidence in a false belief that will not deliver you.)*

9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know,
10 and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations'?

11 Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the Lord.

12 **"But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.** *(Go look back at history)*

13 And now, because you have done all these works," says the Lord, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, **but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer,**

14 **therefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.**

15 **And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren...** *(They were presumptuous ... they had a false belief. They believed they were safe ... but they were not. They*

were destroyed. They had a faith ... a dead faith ... they didn't rely on God)

Here's another example of Israel being presumptuous.

1 Samuel 4:1-11 (NKJV)

1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines, and encamped beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek.

2 Then the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field. *(How can we be defeated? We are God's people! Killed by these uncircumcised Philistines?)*

3 And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? *(Because they were all pretty wicked)* **Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies.**" *(Did they have a Word from God anywhere about this? Is this an illustration of faith? No! There is no Word of God here. It is presumptuous!)*

4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

5 **And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook.** *(These people were sincere ... overjoyed ... but they were presumptuous)*

6 Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What does the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" Then they understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp.

7 So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp!" And they said, "Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before.

8 Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

9 Be strong and conduct yourselves like men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!"

10 So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers.

11 Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. *(Looks like things didn't work out. The ark of the covenant was captured. A disaster!!)*

Then look what happens.

1 Samuel 4:15-18 (NKJV)

15 Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see.

16 Then the man said to Eli, "I am he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line."

And he said, "What happened, my son?"

17 So the messenger answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured." *(It doesn't get much worse than that!)*

18 Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

1 Samuel 4:19-22 (NKJV)

19 Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, due to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her.

20 And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard it.

21 Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

22 And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

A good example of presumptuousness because thousands believed they were doing what was right.

Another enemy of faith is known disobedience.

Galatians 5:6 (NKJV)

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

Faith working through love.

Galatians 5:6 (AMP)

6 For [if we are] in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith activated and energised and expressed and working through love.

You cannot be selfish ... uncaring ... having hostility towards others and expect your faith to work.

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save; (heal)
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear. (The problem is not at God's end)
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.

Psalms 66:16-20 (NKJV)

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. (Conceal ... turn a blind eye)
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 see sin and we know it's there ... then don't expect God to answer our prayer.

1 John 3:20-22 (NKJV)

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. (We can have
faith. We can have confidence. Because we are living right.)

One other major enemy is fear. Fear is an enemy of faith. It will nullify faith. Fear and faith are very very similar. Faith is believing the Promises of God. Fear comes by hearing and hearing ... the words of the devil, satan. Fear and faith are like opposites.

Mark 4:35-41 (NKJV)

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?"** *(As fear comes in ... The faith goes out)*

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

Mark 5:21-24 (NKJV)

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." *(Jairus expressed his confidence in Jesus)*

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

Mark 5:35-43 (NKJV)

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." (*Fear not!*)

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 (*in Greek ... threw them out*), 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.

Notice in this situation ... Jesus said, "FEAR NOT".

We should have the antidote to fear.

2 Timothy 1:4-7 (NKJV)

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.

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.

We have a spirit given to us. It is not a spirit of fear ... but a spirit of POWER, LOVE AND A SOUND MIND.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing ... the Word of God. The lesson isn't changing. We need to invest good quality time in the Word of God. Remember there are enemies ...

AND FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH!!