

Series: Acts

Title: 5 Truths About Faith

Scripture: Acts 20: 1-16

Date: November 5, 2009

Place: SGBC, Princeton, NJ

I want to show you five truths about God-given faith.

Paul has been refreshed at Ephesus as he saw God work mightily. Paul was strengthened in faith, so much so “he purposed in spirit” to revisit all the churches. Then God sent him a trial. The riot broke out at Ephesus. This was a severe trial. Paul told the Corinthians, “We had the sentence of death in ourselves.” This was not the first time Paul had experienced such a trial for preaching Christ. In Philippi he was beaten severely, cast into prison. In Lystra, the Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and dragged Paul out the city, stoned him and left him for dead. But as he did after those other trials, when the trial at Ephesus ended, we read this about Paul:

Acts 20: 1: And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia. 2: And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, 3: And *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

I. FAITH PERSEVERES

After the uproar ceased

Paul comforted his brethren. He departed as he purposed before. He went on preaching the gospel. He faced more God-hating men but he kept right on doing the one thing God gave him to do, that is to bear witness of Christ.

What does that mean, perseverance of faith? We might call it preservation of faith.

James 1: 3:...the trying of your faith worketh patience.

The word is: trials work perseverance, endurance, they prove to the believer that God is able to save as he has promised and that God will do as he pleases. Since God sent the trial to work perseverance in us, we see that it is God who preserves our faith. That is the entire subject of the epistle of James. The man who believes God will patiently endure, persevere in the faith, holding forth the word of Life because we believe God is able and we are pleased for God to do what he will. It manifests itself in continuance in our responsibility to simply set forth the gospel of Christ, rather than turning from the truth to our means. It is manifest in continuing with a tongue that is bridled, rather than a condemning tongue. It is manifest in a in a continuance in a quiet spirit rather than a spirit that exalts self

Faith without this perseverance, without this patient waiting, without this contentment that God will do what is best is no faith at all. Abraham and Rahab are the illustrations James uses.

Abraham and Rahab

The LORD made an everlasting covenant with Abraham. He promised Abraham that he would give Abraham children—brethren, believers—as many in multitude as the stars of the sky. God promised Abraham that through his only son Isaac, the King and Savior of all those brethren, those true sons of Abraham—would be born. Abraham believed God. Then after giving Abraham these promises on which his eternal soul and the soul of all those spiritual brethren hung, the LORD told Abraham to take that very son Isaac and offer him up as a sacrifice to God. And Abraham did it.

Hebrews 11: 19: Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead

Abraham patiently endured, he persevered in faith because he believed God was able to "raise up, even from the dead." He was content for God to do whatever God would do. It is not “faith without morality” is dead, it is “faith without this patient continuance” that is dead. If we part from truth and use our own strength, our own methods, on our own time table, unbridle our tongue, exalt ourselves over all around us, that faith is dead. Rahab can not possibly be considered an example of morality. But she persevered, facing possible death for receiving the spies, because it was what God put in her hands to do and she trusted God was able to raise up, even from the dead.

Paul and Us

Paul was given one responsibility—we are given one responsibility—Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith the Lord, tell my people that in Christ Jesus their warfare is accomplished, I have freely rewarded them double for all their sin—it is called holding forth the word of Christ our Life. Paul manifests that he believed and trusted that God is able to raise up, even from death, by going to God's sheep with the gospel facing cruel sinners, even death. Faith perseveres because God preserves us by teaching us he always saves in the manner that is best.

II. FAITH HAS MANY BRETHREN

Acts 20: 4: And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5: These going before tarried for us at Troas. (And Luke who is writing this)

Sermon on the Mount

In the sermon on the mount, we have seen that our Lord is teaching the believer to believe on Christ who is all our acceptance, perfection, completion with God. He teaches us the right path and to bear his light and easy yoke. He says to us that in his time God shall reward thee openly.

Paul believed on Christ. Paul said, "those things that were gain to me, I count as dung, count all things dung, that I might win Christ." He followed Christ as Christ instructed him. He went forth preaching the glory of God in the person of Christ Jesus as Christ called him to do (Acts 9: 15.) And here we see how that God rewarded him openly. All these brethren were men who the Spirit quickened through Christ Jesus through Paul's preaching. What a reward! Sinners saved by free grace by Christ Jesus through the Holy Ghost.

Why are brethren such a valuable treasure to the believer?

Like Paul in our text, we are traveling through this world.

Hebrews 11: 13:...strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

This world is full of sin. This place is a cursed place. It is the valley of dry bones. Our home is above where our heart is, where our affections are, to where we look. But as strangers and pilgrims, in these bodies of death, surrounded by a world of sin, we face many fleshly lusts.

1 Peter 2:11: Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;...

But here is why brethren are such a treasure to the believer, and what we are called to:

I Peter 3: 8: Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous: 9: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

The reason that the Spirit of God gives to me for not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, is not only for my benefit, but for you, my brethren. Your reason for assembling here is not only for your benefit, but for the benefit of your brethren.

Hebrews 10:25: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Christ our Head supplies each individual member of the body with what is needed to edify the whole body. Through the Spirit he effectually works in each individual part—member—to increase and edify the whole body.

Ephesians 4:16: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, [each member] according to the effectual working in the measure of every part [member], maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Illustration: One believer is older in the faith but younger in age. Another is older in age but younger in the faith. The one can help the other in spiritual edification while the other can help in temporal experience. God has given the believer many brethren for our own good.

So first, faith perseveres. Secondly, faith has many brethren.

III. FAITH CAN NOT GET ENOUGH OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Acts 20: 6: And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. 7: And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight....v11: When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

The gospel unites: _Verse 7: The disciples came together

Christ Jesus brought us separated sinners together with our offended God.

The first man, Adam separated all those he represented from God and all men come into this world separated from God in death, in trespasses and in sins. The second man, Christ Jesus, brought all he represented together with God.

I Timothy 2: 5: For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6: Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Before we ever knew it, Christ made atonement for those he calls into this union with God. Atonement—at one ment. God set him forth a propitiation—satisfaction—he satisfied God on behalf of every sinner he represented. He purged the sin that separated us from our God. He made peace between offended God and his people

Christ Jesus brings every believer together with our brethren.

There is a wall between sinners. It is a wall made by our sinful vanity. We use race, gender, class, creed, country and many other things to exalt ourselves over other sinners. But in Christ:

Galatians 3:28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Col 3:11...neither...circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian,...but Christ *is* all, and in all.

Christ Jesus made this union by being broken, and cut off, separated from God in judgment for us.

Sin caused separation from us and God, from our brethren. When the sin of his people was laid upon Christ, God being of too pure eyes to behold iniquity, our sin separated God from our sin-bearer in righteous judgment.

Isaiah 53: 8:...for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Illustration: As the scape-goat typified, he took our sin way in the wilderness to be seen no more.

It is why he came, and by his faithfulness, God righteousness is manifest, God's glory magnified, his people redeemed and God raised him, well-pleased with his only begotten Son.

We see in our text how that Christ was the tie that bound them together.

Acts 20: 7: And upon the first *day* of the week

Not on the old, legal Sabbath day because Christ is our Sabbath Rest, but on the day our Lord rose from the dead. We do not worship a day but the day our Lord rose every believer rose in him. It was the first day of eternity for us.

The disciples came together to break bread

To remember the broken body and shed blood of Christ in whom we have this precious union with God and our brethren.

Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

They came to hear one more time of this great gracious Redeemer. They were so eager to hear the gospel, Paul so eager for them to hear before he parted, he went on until morning.

While the world was going about doing what the world does, here is the triune God, here is the heavenly host of just men made perfect, a host of angels, here are the saints on earth and everybody has their eye on the One who made God and his saints One—Christ Jesus the Lord. That is why believers can not get enough of the gospel.

IV. FAITH IS SOMETIMES HINDERED BY THE FLESH

Acts 20: 8: And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. 9: And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

Sometimes faith may appear dead.

It is not the fault of the Holy Spirit, perish the thought. Like **the many lights in the upper chamber**, the Light of Christ is always shining. The word of Christ was going forth. It is not the new man of the spirit. The spirit is willing, it is our own sinful flesh that is weak.

What hindered Peter? "I will, I will"—that personal pronoun got so big that he could not see his utter dependence upon Christ. His flesh caused him to slumber. Like this young man, he fell into a deep sleep and fell and appeared dead.

Who keeps our faith from failing?

Acts 20: 10: And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him*...

Do you see Christ the Shepherd in what his under-shepherd, Paul did?

Luke 22: 31: And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: 32: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:...

Peter's flesh made him to slumber and fall like this young man. Peter appeared dead like this young man. But there was never a possibility that his faith would fail, not because of Peter, but because of Christ our Intercessor. He ever lives to make intercession for you, believer.

Acts 20: 10: And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

Romans 8: 34: Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh INTERCESSION for us. 35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...37: Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through HIM that loved us.

Acts 20: 12: And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

Who do you think was most appreciative of Paul after that? That young man! The Lord intercedes, he keeps our faith alive, he comforts his brethren and he makes us to cherish him.

V. FAITH LOOKS FORWARD TO THE DAY WHEN FAITH WILL BE NO MORE.

Acts 20: 13: And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. 14: And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. 15: And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against Chios; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next *day* we came to Miletus. 16: For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Faith is sometimes very active, surrounded with many traveling companions. Faith rejoices in the gospel. Faith is sometimes greatly hindered by the flesh. But whether we are running, walking, crawling, or appear not to be moving,

faith is always, always looking straight ahead, hastening to arrive at heavenly Jerusalem. We look for the ultimate celebration of the harvest. Jerusalem would mean Paul's kinsmen, his countrymen, were all gathered together—we are looking forward to that in glory. Jerusalem would mean opportunity to preach Christ; we await final glory because we will see Christ.

Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend
Even so it is well with my soul!

Revelation 22: 3: And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4: And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads. 5: And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

AMEN!