

Faith In Exercise

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[0 : 00] I would like this morning to look at words we find in the writer to the Hebrews and chapter 12.

And seeking the enabling of the Lord, I want us to consider verses that we have there at the very beginning. Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us.

And let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne.

Of God. Looking unto Jesus, the author, finisher, perfecter of our faith.

For many of the Lord's people, one of the great concerns that seems to come up in discussion and debate in the life of the believer is that of faith.

[1 : 26] And sometimes we want to get into very theological and deep questions about what is faith. We can find ourselves reading a passage like Hebrews chapter 11, where we have a great company of people, who, according to the writer to the Hebrews, expresses what faith has been in their life, and how they have demonstrated that faith, and how they have expressed it in their everyday walk and conversation.

And although we read the word of God and meditate upon it and think about these people, these great saints of the past, sometimes it fails in us to be able to, what we think, exercise faith as we should.

And sometimes we become dispirited, cast down, even to the very point at the time of a communion season, doubting whether or not we should go to the table because of the anxieties that we have concerning our faith.

I could ask the question, what is faith? And we can look through the whole of Scripture and we find it expressed in so many beautiful ways, whether it be through this catalogue of people of the Old Testament, or whether it be from the New Testament people who followed the Lord Jesus Christ. But I do think that what we need to do is to always focus ourselves upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 14] Because, as the writer here says, he is the author and the perfecter of faith.

He is the example of each and every one of us as to how we pursue faith, how we exemplify faith in the life of a sinner saved by grace.

You remember we read in the book of Psalms, and we sang it there just now, and also we have it in Matthew's Gospel at the time of the crucifixion, that great statement, which of course was said prophetically, and was said at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, he trusted God.

That's it in a nutshell. He trusted God. Now, of course, the enemies of Christ, they were mocking. But in essence, that's exactly what Christ has done.

And if you take an opportunity again to look at all the Psalms that we have sung this morning, each and every one of them express what it is to trust in God.

[4 : 30] And if you are comparing your faith with the like of that of Abraham, or Daniel, or Gideon, or any of these great men of the Old Testament, that's fine up to a point.

But it's not sufficient. And it certainly will not help you if you are struggling with the whole concept of your faith and trust in Christ.

Where we have to look is exactly what the writer to the Hebrews says. Looking unto Jesus, the author and the perfecter of faith.

The one who demonstrated in every aspect of his being his whole life. He demonstrated his faith. That's where you and I have to look.

If we are weaknesses, moments of weakness, of trusting, then look no further or nowhere else in the first instance than to Christ.

[5 : 38] I'm not saying that people of the Old Testament, saints of the Old Testament and the New, or saints in the present age can in no way help us with respect to our faith.

But in the final analysis, where my strength, where my faith is going to take off in all its strength and in all its activity is by looking to Christ.

We see that, and this is just by way of note, we see that in the life of Peter, do we not? When Peter saw Jesus walking in the sea, Peter was absolutely astonished at what he saw.

This, yes, you could almost call it a vision, but it was more than a vision, it was reality. Peter saw Jesus walking in the sea. He saw Christ demonstrating an act of faith that was above whatever Peter had ever experienced before, and he wanted to be part of it.

How was Peter going to be part of that demonstration and exercise of faith? By looking to Jesus.

And we know from the narrative of Scripture where Peter's problem began was for the moment he took his eye off Christ and saw this world and the billious nature of this world surrounding him in that great sea, and he lost appreciation and the power of faith for that moment.

[7 : 20] If we find difficulty to maybe sometimes as I say express, what faith really is, as I said, look to Christ. And I wanted just to go through one or two things that I hope will maybe help us to understand the application of faith and yes, the grace of faith as we go forward in our Christian journey by looking to Jesus.

Look at the evidence of faith in Christ himself. And the first thing that I want to suggest, Christ, and this is where we should always return, in any debate that we have with respect to faith, my faith, your faith, anybody else's faith, let's see it as demonstrated in Christ himself.

Jesus' faith was grounded implicitly upon Scripture, upon the Word of God.

And that comes out very, very clearly on numerous occasions when it is said concerning Christ's expression of faith that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

everything that Christ had done, he was careful to draw his attention always to what Scripture had said concerning himself, concerning the very purposes of God for the redemption of mankind.

[8 : 53] Let me go back just for a moment or two to Luke's Gospel and chapter 24. Luke 24 and reading there at verse 44.

Let me read at verse 41. While they yet believed not for joy and wondered and said unto them, Have you any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb and he took it and did eat before them.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I speak unto you while I was yet with you. that all things might be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me.

Jesus identified everything that he did, everything that he stood for, grounded, sure, firm on the word of God. He never went beyond the word of God in terms of a demonstration of his faith.

And when the writer to the Hebrews says, we look to Jesus, we look to Jesus, the author and the perfecter of faith. That's where you go for your faith and mine.

[10 : 11] If you have doubts, if you have fears, if you have concerns, go to scripture. Man, your best friend, the nearest companion that you have in the spiritual life cannot lead you to the greatest of truths regarding your faith, it is to Christ, the fountain of living water.

There is no faith, I don't believe, in God nor likeness to Christ's faith that is not founded in the word of God. God. And we've got to keep on going back.

We heard last evening in here about the importance and the significance of reading the word of God. Because it is, pardon the expression, it is your almanac for your Christian journey.

It is what enables you to be showed and steadfast and to go forward. Again, as I said, read those psalms that we've already sung. The other thing that I think that comes out very strongly for us and that is the faith of Christ was guarded by prayer.

Very, very important. The faith of Christ was guarded by prayer. The attitude of Christ's faith is demonstrated in his constant looking.

[11 : 37] Looking up to his father in Mark's Gospel chapter 4, 46, verse 41 and also chapter 7, 34. I'm not going to look them up at the moment but you have a look at them when you have the opportunity.

Faith is defenceless in itself except surely as it appeals to God, as it appealed to the Lord that he may hedge as it were the believer the very protecting presence of God.

Job 1, verse 10. You look at that as well. It is a great passage for us to help us in guarding each and every one of us. And the Lord Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane and again it's a passage that I've often referred to in preaching and it's one that we must approach very cautiously and not in a worldly spirit at all and certainly not without the attitude of prayer in our hearts.

but when you went into the Garden you can listen to Christ there. You can almost feel the very sense of the faith of Christ as he was there praying to his Father.

What was before Christ was monumental and you and I cannot enter into everything that Christ knew what was before him. as he looked into that cup and what he saw in the cup of curse in the horror of that cup you and I could never even have stood before it and looked into it and thanks be to God we never will have to.

[13:14] but for Christ this whole demonstration yes of his faith his belief that what he was doing was the will of the Father and he put his trust in the Father for it.

He goes does he not in the Garden of Gethsemane there and he prays Father he prays to his Father let this cup pass from me nevertheless not my will but thine be done.

There again surely when you and I are faced with problems and certainly not as I said already certainly not a problem problems and difficulties that Christ had to go through but he is the one that we look to to see faith and exercise here is Christ in the Garden while the disciples are sound asleep and they couldn't even watch not even for one hour and wait for him but there he was with his Father he was as it were expressing for his soul's need the awareness of his Father in that situation as I said faith is defenseless in itself so it is ever appeals to the Lord your faith if you have a problem with it if you have a difficulty find yourself appealing to God always I know it's easy to run to this one or to that but appeal to God and do what

Christ did appeal to scripture not my will but thine be done and if there is something else that demonstrated in Christ exercise of faith as the eternal son of God as the great sin bearer for your sin and mine there is something else that I think that is even more wondrous still in the life and the faith of Christ and that is grace graced by love Christ's faith was ever looking towards the father was it not to supply the needs of others Matthew chapter 14 verse 19 Paul writing to the Thessalonians talks about this faith this work of faith ever been wedded to the labour of love and if we have a problem with that then go to

Jesus and ask yourself how did Jesus do it how did he demonstrate it his work of faith his labour of love was it not all there as I said in the garden of Gethsemane in the great walk to the cross while he was on the cross when he was being crucified when he was being mocked and ridiculed not for one moment did that love lose any edge whatsoever even as the thief appealed to Christ Jesus' response as an exercise of love his faith graced by love to that poor wretched man as it is to you and to me poor man calls to Jesus remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom and Jesus responds today thou would be with me in paradise now for that man and for every one of us here as we read it and as we come to the table tomorrow and you contemplate and you consider

[17:18] Jesus' response to that thief on the cross it's the same kind of response of assurance that comes to each and to every one of us today thou will be with me in paradise whatever our situation the faith of Christ is graced by love all the time how many times have you found yourself in deep darkness when you thought that the waters of this world were overflowing you so much that you thought there was no hope Peter was like that of course was he not sorry for returning to him again but he was like that he started to sink panic fear don't tell me there's no one that there are some people in this building who from a spiritual perspective in the exercise of their faith and in their very life do not have their panics and their fears and their ever deepening concerns

Jesus knew it and it's at that very point where Jesus demonstrates yes the grace of love through the act of faith the action of faith when he reaches out to Peter as Peter is sinking there and Peter I'm sure was even becoming more and more concerned was he going to drown save me I perish the love the love of Christ a demonstration of his faith through every activity one thing that's very interesting I think in the life of Christ as I think it does come out in what the writer to the Hebrews here is asking us to do he says looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame so you and I sit here on a service prior to the communion what is

Christ doing at this moment in time for you and for me what is he doing well we know that he according to scripture he is interceding on our behalf he is praying for us he is praying not for the world but for those whom he has given he has been given out of the world for thine they are and thou hast given them to me and that to me is a huge encouragement to the Lord's people when you have moments of great doubt with regard to your faith for the joy that was set before him he was enduring the cross despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God this Jesus went to the cross went through all that he had to go through the father's will sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and for what purpose yes joy the joy of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the contemplation that one day we will be with him for the thief in the cross today thou would be with me in paradise in the midst of the agony of the cross and all that he had gone through yet before Christ there was this great appreciation joy of joy joy that sinners such as you and I would have eternal life looking unto Jesus the author and the perfecter of faith I love getting into discussions and we had one last evening on this very theme I didn't let on to anybody that I was contemplating doing this today but one thing that we have great fear about I think and that is the gift that Christ has given to us is it sufficient is it

Christ has given you faith to believe to trust I said at the very beginning that faith is trusting in God the world out there what does it see well let me I quoted it in my prayer and maybe you don't agree necessarily with the application of this one and maybe it's straining a little bit but in the Psalm of Solomon we have that tremendous expression I think of the church's exercise and demonstration of faith beautiful who's asking the question who is this coming up out of the wilderness many commentators will have a different opinion as to who is asking the question it doesn't really matter the important point is is what is happening here what is taking place here and not just in that situation that is outlined for us in the song of

[23 : 21] Solomon speaking of the church of Christ and its relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ but what is happening here now what is the most important aspect of faith it's not the theological niceties that we want to maybe get into all the highs and the lows of one's appreciation and understanding of the theological question what is faith what is faith is seen of what you and I do in that picture in the song of Solomon the church is there leaning upon her beloved and there can be no greater demonstration of faith than leaning upon Christ in other words as you approach the communion season don't put trust in yourself don't consider for one moment that yes you are suitably prepared completely prepared we have all these services and they are good and they are right and they are appropriate to prepare for the communion but all of these fail into insignificance if the simple activity of the life of the believer is not one that is Christ like he trusted in God and that's not just the expression of the unbeliever of this world that's what

Jesus said of himself what he did he trusted in God he believed in God he knew that all things were working together for the good of the church of Christ when I look at that picture in the song of Solomon and I can consider many expressions that are suggested there to us of the church of Christ leaning upon our beloved in other words faith will be exercised strongly when you and I put all our affection upon Christ not in another not in anything else no upon Christ Israel's problem time and time again was when she stopped trusting it's the same of course isn't it in everyday life when somebody stops trusting you then that relationship falls apart doesn't it that relationship has no benefit your relationship and my relationship to the

Lord Jesus Christ will go downhill if we stop trusting your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ will go downhill if you stop looking to Jesus and seeing in Christ the fulfillment of everything that he was called upon to do by way of demonstrating the will and the purpose of God so what does the writer here say well you've got this great crowd of witnesses you've got all these men these saints and women of the Old and New Testament they're all there they are evidences of faith and trust in God we go to Abraham we could talk of him as being the father of faith or the faithful what is the right to say seen seeing that we are yes encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us let us run the race looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith maybe I could have said it and stopped a long time ago and just said look all you've got to do to exercise faith focus upon Christ never take your eye often don't allow the world to in any way cause you to take your eye of Christ that's the moment when faith ceases to be what it should be the disciples and the boat they were afraid because there was a huge storm a massive storm so much so that they thought they were going to drown weakness in faith suggested to them let's go and see Jesus and complain to Jesus and let him

make an accusation against him do you not care that we are perishing it's something something that should not be in the vocabulary of the believer but it is because we lack exercise of faith as we should the moment that we start to accuse

Christ because life the Christian life is becoming increasingly difficult to live my life for Christ in a world that is becoming so intrusive upon me what does Jesus say to these disciples oh ye of little faith was he referring to its quantity no we've all been given the gift of faith it's the quality problem it's how we use it the disciples all they could do was complain to Christ do not care it's almost as though you've taken everything away from Christ in one moment there is no one cared like Christ no one ever did for you or for me care for you like

[29 : 42] Christ did and I'm just asking you today that as you approach the communion tomorrow and if you are doubtful and if you say that your faith is weak and so on and so forth and you wish that you were like other people or people of the old testament or maybe an elder or another lady or a sister in Christ you wish you had the faith of that person stop doing that and look unto Jesus the author the perfecter yes of your faith and I hope and pray that for you every one of you that loves the Lord you can go to the table strengthened by Christ shall we pray for to Wij there guys on the Lord ven Republic ■ Would ■ jun from the

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