

Faith that Grows

I'm going to talk about faith. What is the biggest enemy of faith? Many people fight not feeling like they are worth anything. If you walk in shame, you have faith that someone else could get where they need to be, but not you. Our biggest enemy is us not believing that God can remove the past when He gives us a new creation. Old things are passed away when we become a new creature. David cries out to God a lot that he would not be ashamed. When we become born again we think that everything should be a lot easier. I was taught that if I had Jesus in my heart then I would be a good little boy. And I didn't find that to be true. So it was difficult for me to understand how I could make it to heaven when they told me that when Jesus comes into my heart everything is clean and nice because I didn't see that in me. So for years I had to fight what it means to be saved and some of the processes that we go through. I'm thankful that Paul had the same thing. Paul was killing the people that Jesus died for. He was trying to destroy them because they didn't believe what he believed to be true. But after he was converted Paul said, I don't look behind anymore, but I look for the prize of the high calling that is in Christ Jesus. When God showed him he was going the wrong way and gave him a new heart, I don't think it took him very long to realize he was a new creation. He could say at the end, I've fought a good fight, I kept the faith, for as long as I knew which way I was to go. We're going to start out with 1 Thessalonians 1. We're going to see what Paul says about when you are born again. He was always concerned about the faith of the churches that he started. 1 Thessalonians 1:2, *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.* The election of God is what God created you to do upon the earth. Each one of us has to learn to grow our faith. God tells us not to judge and then He turns around and says you need to judge. I can't judge any of you correctly because I'm influenced by what God has caused me to be and what I have to walk in. Each one of you has a different kind of a walk, and yet it's the same. Those that get married recognize that a woman's walk is different than a man's walk and vice versa. And yet we want to tell our spouse how to live. I know my wife sees things that I don't see, and I see things in her that she doesn't see. So what we do is just let the Lord change it. That works a lot better than you trying to change anyone else. So Paul was laboring with the churches to grow their faith. Let's go to chapter 3. 1 Thessalonians 3:1, *Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlaborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:* How many would like to be comforted in knowing that your faith, which is growing each day, is sufficient, or you're on the right path to become a warrior of great faith? Without that you can't be much. In basketball you can see how the faith of being able to make a basket can grow. All of a sudden one team makes a basket and the faith of the team skyrockets and they may make 30 points in a short time while the other team may only make two or three baskets. Then they begin to get tired and the other team catches their wind and starts to come back, or the referees begin to call fouls on them that aren't really fouls, and all of a sudden you see them becoming more and more depressed. That can change a team's atmosphere quickly and cause the other team to win. So he wants to comfort the Thessalonians. Verse 3, *That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.* God never promised you that you wouldn't have afflictions and troubles in this world. If you didn't have afflictions and troubles you would never move on to a higher level to destroy the afflictions because of the vexations that are in you. That's just the way it is and God has chosen to use that to move you from the things of the world to the things of the kingdom of heaven. Verse 4, *For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.* You know the afflictions and tribulations that come to you, and you grow through learning how to handle the afflictions in your own being. Verse 5, *For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.* He was concerned that they would be so overwhelmed with the afflictions that they would begin to say, "I must not even know God. What is going on? I don't understand what's going on. I thought God was a loving God." When we built this church the ground was full of sticky mud. We were trying to just get a foundation laid. It was raining. We were

going to put forms in so we could get it cemented. One of the guys stood and looked at it and said, this is a mess, I thought it was going to be easy building a house for the Lord. But in the scripture, when the children of Israel came back from the heathen nations, they had to have a sword in one hand and labor with the other hand so that if somebody came to try to destroy them they could fight them off. They were building the wall for protection and eventually building the house of God, but He still required this of them. So that is part of teaching you to become stronger. You that have children know that there comes a time when your baby may be 5 or 6 months old and they start to get upset because they can't get anywhere. So they are rolling around and scratching trying to get over to a toy or something and then the parents put it just a little beyond their reach and make them have to go after it. That is torture. No, if they don't have somewhere to go where they've not been, they're not going to get stronger. That's what Paul is telling the Thessalonians. You need to quit questioning whether you have faith. If you didn't have faith you would be out in the world already. So just understand that you're going to have tribulation until the Lord returns and all of the wickedness will be burned up and the elements melted. Verse 6, *But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:* We're comforted because I've been praying daily that you would be able to overcome the issues. You'll find there are a lot of people that have shipwrecked their lives because when they got saved they immediately went out and tried to bring salvation to others rather than becoming solid in faith and the ways of doing warfare. They end up being hammered so bad that many of the people that did have salvation lost it and went back to the world. They were misguided in thinking that everything was going to be ok, and when they had troubles, they thought they never really were changed and they just went back to the way they were. Verse 8, *For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?* God is wanting to perfect every person's faith to the point that you can speak to a mountain, whatever that mountain is. Verse 11, *Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish our hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.* They fought the same thing we fight today: we need let go of our past. When we believe God has fully set us free from that, let's not put ourselves in bondage because of it. There's only one thing that really can keep you from entering into the kingdom of God, no matter what you've done in the past, and that is rejecting Him, which is what the unforgivable sin is. When you reject Him and go back to the world and don't want it anymore, the Holy Spirit won't come to you again. If He does come it's because He thinks there is a hope yet that you haven't totally given up, but you became frustrated in what you're doing. It says in the word that His desire is that not one should perish. God is big enough to be able to take care of every person that ever lived on the face of the earth very easily. It's not a matter of having enough room or not. So one of the first things we need to realize is that God is big enough to take the sins away and remember them no more. He wipes your slate clean and you start, not as a mature Christian, but as a baby that needs milk. So we look at our children. They start out with just the mother's milk for months, and eventually start adding food, and that's the way we grow with God too. We don't want to take babies and put them out there in the world and expect them to have victories of fighting the enemy off of somebody else that is in great bondage.

Now let's turn to Hebrews 4:1, *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* We need to have the fear of the Lord that we don't miss a promise that He has given to His children in the word, or a promise specific to you. That special promise, whatever it is, hang onto it in faith. You can tell if your faith is growing if you begin to focus. In the winter time there are houses and things that I see driving along that in the summer time are back behind trees and brush and I forget they are even there even though I go by them about every day. We can do that as well with the promises of God. If God made a promise for His children and you are born again, then we should have the fear of God in us that we don't want to miss any promise

that was given to His children. We might overlook it, and miss entering into His rest. His rest is the supernatural, that is, everything that God made, He made it to be supernatural. When man sinned, that changed because God won't share His glory with satan. Verse 2, *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* When you hear a promise, whether it's from the pulpit, reading the word, or whatever it is, that word comes in you, but you have to mix that promise with work. It's confusing because that word work isn't like going and getting a job, that work is like the hope of receiving it through Him. So that's a work and it's one of the things Paul wrote about. We have the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and those things that he taught us to protect us and that is always a work so we don't get led astray by the world and carried back to where we once were in bondage. So if you just hear it and say that was a good message, and you let it go from that point on, it did you no good because it's going to disappear. That thing is going to get carried off if you don't have the fear of: I have to find out. I wore a tape out from a man preaching on what's bound in heaven is bound on earth and what's bound on earth is bound in heaven. I listened to that tape at least a hundred times. I wore the tape out to where I couldn't hear it anymore. After years I finally began to understand what it meant for the things that are bound in earth to be bound in heaven and the things that are bound in heaven to be bound upon you. So the promises that God has given me from heaven (what He said He would do for me), are bound in heaven, and then I bind that to me to receive it, which is faith. And let that faith grow in me until I don't notice it anymore. How many of you are going to sit at your next meal and tell the muscles in your mouth to move just a certain way to get all the food on your teeth so you can chew it and eat it? And then talk to your tongue to keep back just a little bit so you don't bite it. Don't go to the side, let's keep it in the right place. How many are going to do that today? No. Because once you learn how to do it, you don't have to be taught again. It's the same as riding a bicycle. Once you learn how to ride it you can ride until you can't pedal anymore. So when it comes to the place that it's just who you are and one day you'll maybe wake up and say, "Huh, this is what I was fearful of losing but it's in me, it's working in me and it's giving me rest in that area." When I went to out west, I fished in a fish house and I was tired of being there because there were some that would come in and be rude beyond measure. As soon as you would catch a fish they would step in and throw their pole right where you caught a fish. I wanted to fish where it was quiet. I realized that I have come to the place that I don't have the ambition to be competitive anymore. I realized that's part of the rest that God wants to give us: to remove competition so that there's not friction. So for three days I fished in a different spot and I'll never forget it. The Lord became so precious. I was so thankful I received permission to fish there. I thoroughly enjoyed it and caught bigger fish and had more fun than all the other times put together. So God began to change me in many ways. I began to realize that what God wanted to do was teach us where the fish are. I was over at the other place trying to catch fish and it was hard. Verse 3, *For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. Those that believe do enter into rest.* John 11 says those that believe in Me, even though they die, they shall live again. But those that believe and live in Me shall never die. People think that everyone that is saved is going to just go to heaven. That's not true. Those that have entered into His rest are going to be the ones that rule and reign for the thousand years. And after that, the second resurrection will come of those that believed but did not enter into His rest, which is the supernatural. Verse 4, *For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* When God begins to speak to you, don't shut Him off. Verse 8, *For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.* So there is a labor that we have to do and that is to keep the world and the generations of unbelief out of our being so we can enter into the rest of the kingdom we were born into, which is the kingdom of God. If you don't labor to enter into it, you're never going to get in there, because that is your responsibility. It says

let us labor therefore to enter into that rest lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. Often when I teach, I say this is a really important message and you need to go over it until you understand it. That understanding is to begin to believe it by faith so it will grow into a place that it will just be part of who you are. Verse 12, *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.* There is a difference between what the soul wants and what the spirit wants. When you are born again, the soul is saved by Christ dying on the cross. Christ's spirit then will take the place of the world's spirit. So if you take the word of God that's in you, and mix it with faith, you'll begin to have eyes to see what it's doing. ...*and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* I talked about judging other people. If we have the word of God in us, it's quick, powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, and we can then counsel someone by the word of God. Not by what we see or think, but by the word of God. It will speak to you about his soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, (joints have to do with your own flesh and the marrow has to do with blood that will fight the things that harm you). The word of God is a discerner of your thoughts and the intent of your heart. Verse 13, *Neither is there any creature (that's you or me) that is not manifest in his sight.* Anything that's in you, you manifest in God's sight. He knows what's in you. And if Christ is in you, you know what's in Him. ...*but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* Jesus has eyes to see and He gives them to those that He lives in to see what you have in your mind. Verse 14, *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.* So if the word of God shows us what's going on, who's judging it? The word of God is. So we can judge if we have the ability through the word of God but otherwise, if you don't have that, you better not be judging. Because as you judge, you'll be judged yourself. But if God shows you that, He shows you where you're living in that same thing. I look back in my life and I see when I was young I was operating in some of the same ways I see people operating today, like the god of force. I wouldn't have known it was the god of force except God said we have to remove that thing. And it took us four or five years to do that, and we still fight it. We are very careful not to allow the god of force to get a stronghold in our lives because it's the same spirit that killed Jesus. One of the disciples said that even now it's at work in the world. Verse 16, *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* When I pray for someone, I take them to the throne of grace. I can see the Lord sitting there and me and whoever it is I'm praying for will stand in front of Jesus and ask for His mercy. Any of you can, once Christ is in you, and you're mature enough to know how to handle the preciousness of the things of God without taking it and using it for your own self-gain.

We have to know that God loves us and we're in the regeneration process, to regenerate us like He created from the beginning. Faith is what God gave Abraham. He believed God and it was considered righteous. He believed God when He said He was going to come and that Abraham was going to live in a city not built by hands. In this faith process, we're going to come into the whole understanding that God is regenerating us and that we are going to live once again like He created, and it will be forever for those that really want Him.