

## Remnant Life Church

February 19, 2017

### Tests of Our Faith

Heb 11:6

- At the very foundation of our lives as Christians is our faith
  - Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God to save our sins
  - Faith in the regenerative, life-changing power of the shed blood
  - Faith in His presence with me in every situation
  - Faith that His Word is true and perfect
  - Faith that He hears my prayers and cares about my life
- But we are not given a mature, fully-grown faith when we become a Christian
  - Like our bodies our faith grows, strengthens, must be fed and exercised
- Faith is unique in that it takes on many appearances
  - For some it takes on a very aggressive and intense form when it is being used
  - For others it is very quiet and steady
- Of course the Bible is our source for developing our strength of faith – it is the “How To”
  - **Math 9:29** - “*According to your faith let it be done to you*” (Jesus healing the blind man)
    - In other words for us this morning – what is your expectation of God?
    - What is your faith level?
    - We tend to experience, and see, and hear what we expect – person, event, encounter...
    - God has given us choice to believe, not in expectation, but in faith
  - **Heb 11:6** - *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*
    - Pistis (faith – greek) – not just a general feeling of belief but faith IN Jesus Christ; who He is; what He did for us; how it changed us
    - Many examples of faith in the Bible that are spoken of in the parent/child relationship
    - To please God is not unlike the child who pleases his/her parent
    - What pleases God? – our child-like faith
      - Jesus said, *And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 18:3)*
  - **Luke 17:5** – “*The disciples said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’*”
    - I want greater faith; you want greater faith because it pleases God
    - But how can my faith grow?
    - The way that happens is by God testing it
  - **James 1:2-4** - *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces*

*perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

- **Job 7:17-18** - *“What is mankind that you make so much of them, that you give them so much attention, that you examine (test) them every morning and test them every moment?”*
- There are many ways that God tests, develops, proves, and builds our faith – this morning we will look briefly at just four of them

## 1. God tests our faith through difficulties

- a. Nothing occurs in our lives that is not “Father Filtered”
  - i. This is not to say that God sends sin into our lives – He doesn’t have to – there is a prince of this world who does that
  - ii. Job could not have had to go through his trials without God’s permission
  - iii. Nothing happens by accident in the life of a Christian
- b. **Isa 48:10** - *See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.*
  - i. What is the furnace of affliction?
  - ii. We all can identify times that the heat has been up
  - iii. The analogy being used by Isaiah is the furnace of the refiners fire is so hot that the impurities of the raw silver and gold brought from the ground are burned away leaving the pure metal
  - iv. A silversmith was once asked how he knew all the impurities were burned away
    1. He said when I can see my reflection in the silver
    2. When God sees His reflection in our lives the impurities will be gone
    3. That will come to the place of finality when we are face to face with Him
- c. The other aspect of this test is how you respond
  - i. **James 1:2** – *Consider it pure joy when you face trials of every kind*
  - ii. How? By knowing that His purpose and plan for me are worth so much more than the comparatively small price of discomfort we may be asked to endure
  - iii. We have talked about this many times over the last several weeks
  - iv. How you respond can often be one of the greatest factor in determining how long your faith needs to be tested at that time.

## 2. God tests our faith through commands

- a. In the NT alone there are 1050 commands
- b. Some are obvious, others may seem unreasonable, some may just be plain impossible
- c. What do you do when you feel as if God has given you an impossible command?
- d. It has been given to test your faith

- e. Abraham was given several difficult and even seemingly impossible commands
  - i. Leave your country – where am I going? – I tell you when you get there
  - ii. Believe that I will make a great nation from your line of descendants – 100/90
  - iii. Sacrifice your son
    - 1. *Gen 22:2 - Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."*
  - iv. This is IMPOSSIBLE
    - 1. Abraham obeyed and his tested faith grew
    - 2. Listen – obey – do – the formula for growing faith

### 3. God tests our faith through dollars

- a. Many Christians do not realize that a powerful testing of their faith comes through their bank account
- b. How do you handle what God has given you?
- c. If you are in debt and struggling with your money what happens?
  - i. Is tithing the first thing you cut out when things get tight?
  - ii. Your faith is being tested
  - iii. Are you frivolous with your money when you get some extra?
  - iv. Your faith is being tested
- d. You might be saying Jesus didn't talk about possessions in the terms of money
  - i. *Luke 16:11 - So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?*
  - ii. Worldly wealth is money
  - iii. Mammon – more literal translation is confidence in wealth
  - iv. Jesus said if that is what happens to you with money how can you be trusted with true riches – things of the spirit
  - v. Don't you think that when Katerina and I give our tithe – 10% of our income – that there are not times when my faith is being tested? Of course it is!

### 4. God tests our faith through delays

- a. If every prayer were immediately answered and we always got what we wanted when we wanted it there would be no need for our faith to grow
- b. Waiting builds our patience and our faith
  - i. The time of things....
    - 1. It takes 6 seconds to fold a towel out of the laundry
    - 2. It takes 10 minutes for a snowflake to form as it falls through the atmosphere
    - 3. It takes 3 hours and 15 minutes to watch James Cameron's movie Titanic
    - 4. It takes 24 hours for plaque to colonize on your teeth



5. It takes one week for bacon to lose its freshness in a refrigerator set at 32 degrees
    - ii. The times of some of the greatest testing revolve around things that may not be very important in and of themselves but God will use anything, any situation to test and grow our faith – because He loves us!
    - iii. Children of Israel in the desert – 3-4 weeks verses 40 years
      1. **Deut 8:2** - *Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.*
      2. AGAIN – how long you are tested will many times be up to you!
- Go back now to what the disciples prayed in Luke 17:5 – Lord, increase our faith
    - Like praying for patience this is a dangerous prayer
  - Which of these areas this morning has God been revealing to your heart over the last few minutes?
    - Are there difficulties in your life right now?
    - Are there demands on your life that just seem to be too difficult or even impossible?
    - Are your finances at such a place that it is paycheck to paycheck or even less?
    - Are you waiting and waiting and waiting on something very important?
  - Your faith, Christian, is being tested
    - You have an opportunity to see your faith grow and become stronger
    - What's the condition of your demeanor right now?
    - Are you rejoicing in spite of what is happening?
    - Are you praising God even though your life is very hard right now?
    - Are you able to still be a witness for the goodness of God?
  - You need to be able to answer “yes” to those last three questions.
  - Our faith is the foundation cornerstone of our lives
  - Give God praise and thanks when it is being tested and see what God will do in and through you when you come out the other side!