

Faith, Family, and Freedom - the Cultural Mandate

"The Life of Faith"

Genesis 1:28 1 NLT

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"Then God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it.'"

Ephesians 2:8 NLT

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"

One of the most important topics we can preach on, teach on, talk about, and study is, the Life of Faith. Trust, Belief, and Faith are absolutely essential for being born again, saved, and for living an overcoming life of victory! Without faith, we can't even know Jesus. We enter into the grace of God by faith. We step *into* it by faith. The Bible says we live our *lives* by faith, and it also talks about the fact that without faith, we can't *please* God. The life of faith is critical as the foundational building block for our life.

We're not going to grow in our faith by osmosis just by showing up, but by going deeper, stronger, and harder, and to become a victor in Christ, we're going to have to embrace the life of faith. We want to have a faith that pleases our Father - not so we can *get* stuff, but so that we can know him *better*. When we live a life of faith, things are going to happen because we're now walking at a different level than we were before. We're no longer going to live *under* our circumstances, but we'll now live over our circumstances. We can live an overcoming life - a life where we have a Christ confidence, not just *self*-confidence. That doesn't mean we're arrogant or braggadocious. All this is *Bible*, and if it's Bible, it's not bragging.

We need faith to please God

1] The New Testament exhorts us to find out what *pleases* God. The Greek word for "exhort" means *to urge, encourage, or admonish someone warmly and intimately, to live rightly, grow spiritually, or pursue good works*. It is an act of coming alongside another believer to inspire and strengthen them.

Victor Marx talks about the difference between *motivate* and *inspire*. *Motivation* is short-lived because it's the adrenaline rush when something happens and we get excited about it but then when a couple of days pass, we're off to something else. We've already forgotten. *Inspiration* is deep, and we come alongside somebody to inspire them and to *help* them. What are we doing? - we're *exhorting* them - it's *encouragement* with a punch. It's encouragement with some *beef* in it. It's got content and weight.

Ephesians 5:8-10 NIV84

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord."

Paul is encouraging and exhorting in the *present* - we are "light in the Lord." The Lord told us in the Sermon on the Mount that we are "salt and the light" - salt of the earth, and light of the world. He said we're to live as "children of light." What does that mean? - that means we're to *shine* when we show up. There's something about people that are carriers of great faith and they understand they're carrying the Light. There should be something about us - something in us that *glows* - something in us that goes before us and remains after us, and it is the residue of the presence of God in and on our life. The fruit of this light that's inside of us just shines out and it impacts and affects everything it touches.

2] The New Testament exhorts us to make it our goal to please the Lord. We need to ask, *"Father, what pleases You? What would please You in this hour? What would please You at this meeting? What would please You in this time that we're together? What would please You as we just go out of the house in the morning? Lord, what would please You as we sit around the dinner table with our family? Lord, what would please You?"*

Corinthians 5:7-9 NIV84

"We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it."

We shouldn't be moved by what we see. We shouldn't be moved by what we witness or by what our eyes land upon. We should be moved by faith. Paul was saying that if we die, we get to be with the Lord, but if we stay here, it's for other people's good. In other words, no matter what, whether we're with him in heaven, which we will be, or whether we're down here for however much time we have left, we should make it our goal and our aim to please the Lord.

It's interesting because we don't like to think about this often, but when we start asking the Lord what would please him, it starts to eliminate some things we like to do - it starts to get into our personal space. It starts to impact *our* "truth." and actually, if we ask him, "*Lord, what would please You?*" and if we actually give him a moment, he'll begin to *tell* us what pleases him. It may not be the epic things we're thinking of, but it could be just going around to the other side of the car and opening the door for our wife, and *that* might please the Lord. We know it'll please our *wife*, but that might also please the Lord, right?

When we think about the things that would please the Lord, we tend to think of the big stuff, but it might be something as simple as an act of kindness just for the sheer pleasure of doing it and for the pleasure of the other person. We need to say, "*Father, what would please You right now?*" It might not be the *big* thing. It may not be getting called to go to Africa. We're so afraid of that. We're afraid to ask God anything else. We think we'll end up being a missionary in Africa. We might just be a missionary in our own home around the dinner table - a "dinner-table missionary." *That's* where we need to *start*.

3] The New Testament exhorts us to please God and not men. Remember that word *exhort - strong encouragement, inspiration* - exhorts us to please God and not men. 1 Thessalonians 2:4 says, "*On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.*" On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. Paul's talking about how they were out planting churches all through the Book of Acts.

Thessalonica was one of those outposts, and as they planted those churches, he said they had been approved by God and they had been entrusted with the gospel - the Good News, the message of Jesus. He was talking about their journey through Acts to plant churches and said they were not trying to please men but God who tests our hearts.

"Who are you trying to please?"

We live our lives seeking to please someone. Sometimes we try to please everyone. It can be a brutal and fragmented way to live. What would happen if we authentically lived our lives to please God first every single day? I believe we would change the world. Don't you? I think the world would flip in a couple of days if we all did this. If we got a billion Christians together and all said, "Let's try something - a grand experiment - how about we try to please God first before we try to please ourselves or anybody else?"

What if we did that? I think it'd flip the world upside down in a day. Paul made it clear that the life of faith is one that is lived to please God, not people. What would need to change in your life to please God first? Can we pause on that just for a second? Put that on low simmer back here just for a minute. What would need to change in your life to please God first? Would it be removing something or would it be adding something? Or could it be you're doing the same things but with a different mindset, a different perspective?

Now, I'm not doing this for me. I'm not doing it for them. I'm not doing it to get something. I'm doing it to honor him in it. Whatever you do in word or deed, Scripture says, do it all in the name of the Lord. All for his glory. Do it all in his name. So, there may not be a lot of changes other than right here and right here. What would need to change in your life to please God first? What is holding you back from doing it? - Pastor Jimmy's "Daily Grind"

4] However, the New Testament lists only one way to please God - by Faith. The New Testament lists only one way to please God. Here's how you do it: *"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."* (Hebrews 11:6 NIV84) There it is. *"He's a rewarder of those who earnestly seek,"* which means *to pursue passionately - to pursue with intensity and energy.* He rewards those who go *after* him.

Hebrews 10:38-39 NIV84

"But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."

God is a rewarder of those who seek him. It's impossible to please God without faith. And now he says, *"My righteous one will live by faith."* - the one who is in *right-standing*. That's what righteous is - *"the one who is in right-standing before Me will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."* In other words, If he shrinks back from faith, steps away from belief and trust, he says, *"I'll not be pleased, but we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."* As we believe, we move closer.

In spite of the circumstances that are happening when things are going good and the mountain top's in sight or we're *on* it, then it's like, *"Oh, God's amazing. God's good all the time and all the time God's good."* It's easy to say that when things are going well, but not when the *bottom* drops out, when the diagnosis comes, when somebody runs a stop sign they shouldn't have, or when a ten-point buck walks out in front of our car at seventy-five miles an hour.

In spite of the circumstances that are happening, we can't just be fair-weather Christians. Life happens. *Things* happen. Circumstances will come and go like a West Texas thunderstorm, but at the end of the day, we have this: we trust by faith that God is good all the time and all the time God is good.

5] We need to live by faith. This sounds simple, but simple doesn't mean easy. Don't mistake it. We must live by this faith, and that might mean looking into things and not being able to see the outcome. But if we know God's with us and we know God's ordering our steps, then we walk into it no matter what it looks like. What is it? It's going into something that we can't necessarily see, but we trust God in it because we know he's good.

Romans 1:17 NKJV

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.' "

That literally means in the Greek, *from one level of faith to the next, from one layer to the next*. Think about it. It's increasing in nature. God is revealed from one level of faith to an increasing level of faith to another. In other words, our faith is ever-growing and ever-expanding. God says that his kingdom will have no end. In other words, it's continuing to increase all the time. Faith is continuing to increase. We're *growing* in our faith. We're growing in our *trust* - unless we choose *not* to. So we move from faith-to-faith, as it is written, *"the just shall live by faith."*

Faith should not be limited only to healing and provision as it is in some circles. There are times when that's what we're going to release our faith for - *healing* - or we're going to release our faith for *provision*. But it's for every area of life. Faith works. In other words, faith is *practical*, or why would we *have* faith - need faith for *anything* - if it didn't work? Why would God call us to do something and say, *"You can please Me when you do it with this, and without this, you can't."* Why wouldn't that work for real life?

Faith works in practical ways for our daily life. How many times has the Lord, the Holy Spirit, the God of Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ who was raised from dead on the third day helped us find our keys that we lost. Whenever we misplace things, we need to stop and say, *"Have you prayed about it? Have you asked the Holy Spirit yet?"* Faith is practical and it works in every area of our life. It's practical in the little things, but it's practical in the epic things as well, like our *families*. So, do we want to please God? ...*let's walk by faith*.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word, for we understand that by hearing Your Word, faith comes, and that without faith, it is impossible to please You. Lord give us a hunger to read and study Your Word, knowing that our faith will increase as we do. Give us grace to live by faith. Help us to see through eyes of faith and not by our own sight. Thank You that faith is practical and works in every area of our life, and that, as we diligently seek You by prayerfully reading and studying Your Word, You reveal Yourself and reward us from one increasing level of faith to another, and Your kingdom will have no end. We love You and honor You. In Jesus' name.

Amen