

The Faith Files

Peter's Letters

October 27, 2001

1. 1 Peter 1:3-5

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, who through **faith** are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (NIV)

- Faith is our defense system. It shields us by God's power from all manner of danger and attack. Faith is part of the armor for the believer listed in Ephesians 6:10-17.
- Salvation is both now and later. Our faith brings us deliverance now from much that could and would afflict us. Our faith also brings us later to a salvation that is stored for us in heaven.
- This should lead us to praise and worship because of God's mercy and deliverance.

2. 1 Peter 1:6-7

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your **faith**-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

- Faith is more precious than gold. You should work harder to have and maintain your faith than you do to accumulate gold. Gold is one of the most durable metals, but it still will perish in time. Your faith is imperishable.
- I entitled my first book, *Life is a Gold Mine: Can You Dig It?* One of the gold mine principles I discuss in the book is faith, because it is compared to gold in the Bible. Think about how you mine gold and that is the same effort it may take to develop faith.
- What price are you willing to pay to have faith? What are you willing to go through? Before you answer, think of the heroes of faith—Abraham, Hannah, David—and their stories. Think of what they went through to provide a story for God to use with you and me. Can you do that?

- Trials come not to aggravate us but to in part prove that our faith is genuine. An athlete can only prove and showcase his or her talents in game conditions. In the same way, faith can only be proved to be genuine when it is applied in real-life conditions. You don't build faith by reading about it, but by applying what you have read.
- When others behold God's faithfulness in response to your faith, they will praise God. What you are going through is happening so that God may be glorified—which means declared excellent—when you are delivered with your faith in God intact and vindicated.
- Now that we are dead and alive in Christ, God is everything! Your trials have come to bring praise, worship and glory to God who will deliver you from them all! It's not about you or your comfort any longer. It's about God's will.

3. 1 Peter 1:8-9

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you **believe** in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your **faith**, the salvation of your souls. (NIV)

- The goal of our faith isn't a house, job or peace. It's salvation. This life may bring tremendous trials and not turn out as we would have hoped. But salvation is our goal. If things don't work out in this life, then there is another life where justice will be done.
- We walk by faith and not by sight. We believe what we cannot see, which necessitates that we train our senses to respond to true reality in the unseen realm.
- Joy is an indication that our faith is properly focused. Do you have joy? Do you have a proper perspective on the future and what God has saved you from and is saving you to? What can you do to get your joy back?

4. 1 Peter 1:21

Through him you **believe** in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your **faith** and hope are in God. (NIV)

- Jesus came to show us the Father. Our faith is in God the Father through Jesus in the power and with the help of the Holy Spirit. That is team ministry!
- I pray to the Father in the name of Jesus with the Holy Spirit helping me pray as I ought.

- We saw what the Father did in Jesus' life and we have faith that He will do the same in our lives. The Father did not abandon Jesus, and He will not abandon us. We have faith in that.
- Jesus taught not only with words but through example. There is a saying, "Some things are better caught than taught." This means there are some things you must see firsthand so you understand them and see how to apply them. Jesus gave us that opportunity to "catch" what the Father is like.

5. 1 Peter 5:9

Resist him, standing firm in the **faith**, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (NIV)

- We resist the devil by standing firm in faith. The enemy tries to convince us that God is unfaithful, that if He really loved us, He would not allow the trials and suffering we're going through.
- Suffering isn't an indication that you've done something *wrong*, but that you've done something *right*. And the fact that all believers are going through the same experience simply proves that God's work is real in all our lives; suffering is an important part of His plan to conform us to the image of His Son, Jesus.
- Faith and persecution unite believers all over the world. You are part of the family of faith and that makes you an enemy of the evil one.
- Suffering develops compassion and helps us understand what others are going through. Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered (see Hebrews 5:7-10). If Jesus learned through suffering, so will you and I.
- Are you suffering? In what area? Ask God to help you see what this suffering is adding to your being conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus.

6. 2 Peter 1:1

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a **faith** as precious as ours: (NIV)

- We have focused on the "action" requirements for those with faith. But we cannot overlook that faith is a gift from God. God opens our eyes and by His grace allows us to have faith.
- Can you thank God today for the faith you have received? Can you keep thanking Him from this day forward?

- We all have received a precious faith, irregardless of where we live or what we've done. This should unify the body of Christ, not separate us.

7. 2 Peter 1:5-8

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your **faith** goodness; and to goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV)

- We must make every *effort* to add to our faith the qualities necessary for a productive and effective life. Pick one item from the list above—self-control, godliness, kindness—and make an effort this week to add it to your faith.
- The word for “ineffective” above is *argos*, which is translated “barren” in the King James Version and literally means in Greek “lazy, shunning the labor that one ought to perform.” Are you lazy in faith?
- This passage begins with faith and ends with an exhortation to be effective and productive. Do you see the natural progression that faith should take?
- The Greek word for “unproductive” is *akarpos* and is translated “unfruitful” in the King James Version. It literally means “not yielding what it ought to yield.” Jesus said that He chose us to bear fruit. (see John 15:1-4, 16-17).
- Where is your greatest area of productivity? Is it with people? Projects? Business? Ministry? Wherever it is, endeavor this week to be fruitful and productive.

8. 1 Peter 1:21

Through him you **believe** in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your **faith** and hope are in God. (NIV)

- Peter has an interesting way of focusing our faith on the Father. That is really what Jesus came to do: show us the Father. But we see the Father in order to have faith in Him, not just to know who He is.

9. 1 Peter 2:7

Now to you who **believe**, this stone is precious. But to those who do not **believe**, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," (NIV)

- Jesus was and is controversial. He isn't a historical figure to be studied, admired or rejected. He is the object of faith. We believe that the Father sent Him, that He is the Son of God.
- It is of note that some people aren't neutral about Jesus. They hate Him. Therefore, they hate His followers.
- There are those who reject faith in Christ, but embrace Him as a teacher and moral figure. They miss the point entirely. Jesus is the cornerstone of my relationship with God and the church. He is my focus, although focusing on Him shows me the Father through the Holy Spirit.

10. 1 Peter 3:1

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not **believe** the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, (NIV)

- Submission is an attitude that expresses itself in gentleness of deeds. Submission isn't the same as obedience.
- In Acts 4:18-22, the Sanhedrin ordered the apostles not to preach in the name of Jesus. The apostles did not obey, but they did submit. Does that make sense? They were asked to not do something that God was commanding them to do. They submitted to the council's authority to discipline and even kill them, but they could not obey.
- Do you agree or disagree?
- If a husband asks a wife to do something that is immoral, she *cannot* obey. But she can maintain an attitude of submission and suffer the consequences of her faith.
- Jesus submitted to Pilate's authority in John 19:8-11. He could have condemned or responded harshly to Pilate. He did not. Some tradition has it that Pilate later became a believer, although there is no way that can be verified this side of heaven.
- This kind of submission has power, for God will act on the wife's behalf. Her submission is in essence a form of evangelism. But this submission also works for a believing wife whose believing husband may not obey a particular word at any point in time.

11. 1 Peter 2:17

Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of **believers**, fear God, honor the king. (NIV)

- When we believe, it makes us part of the family of believers. I am related to you, the reader, because of our faith, not because of our church doctrine. If I believe in Jesus and you believe in Jesus, then we are family.
- Peter, like Paul, does not refer to us as Christians. We are identified by one thing and one thing only and that is our faith that is expressed to one another through love.

12. 1 Peter 5:12

With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a **faithful** brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. (NIV)

- I'm not sure that it is enough that I consider myself full of faith or faithful. If I'm faithful, it will manifest itself in my actions and others will see it as well. Peter considered Silas faithful and that testimony stands for the ages to all readers. What a legacy Silas left.
- It doesn't say Silas was a great preacher, worker of miracles or holy man. It says he was faithful. What legacy do you want to leave with those who know you?