

## *The Encouragement of Faith*

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**Introduction:** When a man truly lives by faith he has an abundant life.

- A. One who has this faith will find others drawn to them. (**Acts 2:46-47**)
  - 1. Men long for a singleness of life that is fulfilling.
  - 2. Men also do not want to be fooled by lies and acting.
  - 3. In a real crisis Paul's faith gave direction and hope to unbelievers.  
(**Acts 27:21-25, 35-36**)
- B. The power of a living faith is in its ability to release us from the earthly view of life.
  - 1. There are days where I am caught up in myself I look up and see the beauty of God's creation and am reminded what is real!
  - 2. Take two healthy people; one may be filled with burdens, bitterness and distrust while the other is filled with optimism, love and purpose.
  - 3. Jesus pointed out why His followers have found this peace.  
(**Mt 11:28-30; Jn 10:9-10**)
  - 4. Early in my life I saw this need for God's peace! (**Jn 16:31-33; Rom 8:18**)
  - 5. We can easily cease to walk by faith.

### ***I. The power of a living faith in one's heart***

- A. Some have never had a living faith. (**Jas 2:18-20**)
  - 1. Consider some cheap substitutes for a living faith: knowledge, activity, tradition, worship and originality.
  - 2. The glaring inconsistency of this "faith" becomes evident in time. (**Jn 18:28**)
  - 3. Be assured that our children will see this inconsistency.
- B. A living faith is full of optimism.
  - 1. There is great strength in knowing that God is with you! (**Acts 16:27-34**)
  - 2. There is great strength in knowing that money and things are not the center of your life. (**1 Tim 6:6-8, 10**)
  - 3. How does a person who is filled with this kind of joy act?
- C. A living faith is full of courage. (**2 Cor 4:13**)
  - 1. A living faith is bold and wants to help others. (**Acts 4:29-31**)
  - 2. Why would some be afraid to speak? The world will punish you with lost friendships and family that will shun you.
  - 3. Many "Christians" have given up speaking the word or will abandon those who do if their friends become upset.
  - 4. Paul knew the importance of having the right companions in this work.  
(**Acts 15:37-38**)
- D. A living faith is full of zeal.
  - 1. Zeal can be best described as energy and fire.
  - 2. Where does our zeal come from? (**Tit 2:13-14**)
  - 3. Are we at North Charlottesville building a living faith?

### ***II. There are environments that faith cannot grow in***

- A. Faith cannot grow in materialism. (**1 Tim 6:17-19**)
  - 1. How will I know if I am substituting earthly wealth for faith?

2. How do you view your brethren? (**Jas 2:5-6**)
  - a. In the world the rich look down on those who have less.
  - b. What does our tongue reveal about us?
3. A local church cannot build faith in such an environment.
- B. Faith cannot grow in a heart of pride.
  1. Many glory in their ability to think. (**1 Cor 8:1-3**)
  2. In an atmosphere of pride men must praise and recognize others or be attacked and shunned. (**2 Cor 10:12; Gal 4:17**)
  3. Pride will always form cliques and parties.
- C. Faith cannot grow in an atmosphere of fear. (**Num 14:1-2, 9**)
  1. What do we fear? What does faith say? (**1 Pt 3:11-13**)
  2. Fear will drive you into isolation and misery.
  3. Fearful people need to learn how to believe in God.
- D. Faith cannot grow in a heart of bitterness. (**Heb 12:14-15**)
  1. It is very easy to let your hearts become filled with these thoughts.
  2. It is even easier to share and spread these thoughts. Some who are awkward socially have found “acceptance” in the “fellowship of the miserable.”
  3. Do you want the fruit of the spirit or the fruits of the flesh? One will take a lot of cultivation and weeding while the other needs little effort.

### ***III. The center of our relationships as Christians is our faith***

- A. The heart of our assemblies must be here. (**Heb 10:23-25**)
  1. Our assemblies and not just individuals coming to their own isolation chamber and then going home. There is a “one-another” aspect as well.
  2. The truth is that our general assembly should be but a fraction of our time together. Why is that not true for us?
- B. One fruit of faith is edification of other Christians.
  1. The essence of our encouragement in association is our faith? Some are encouraged by something else. (**Rom 1:11-12**)
  2. The building of faith was the center of Paul’s relationship with other Christians. (**Col 2:5; Phil 2:19**)
  3. What gave Paul encouragement? (**1 Thess 3:1-5**)
    - a. Paul knew that the battle for these Christians would be the establishing of their faith.
    - b. In tribulation do we see the hope and power of God?
- C. Faith is maintained in an atmosphere of love (**Col 2:2**)
  1. Consider what you must add to your faith (**2 Pt 1:5-9**)
  2. What made the work of Barnabas so strong? (**Acts 4:36; 11:22**)
  3. Be honest are your relationships with brethren based on a mutual faith or on other mutual interest? The future of this church lies in the answer.

***Conclusion:*** We must win the battle for the mind.

- A. Paul saw this terrible struggle among the Galatians. (**Gal 4:19-20**)
- B. We are no different than other Christians who have resisted Satan. We need to be humble and wise and above all to take the shield of faith.

**Any questions or responses are welcome**

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