

[Faith, Hope & Love_Part2](#)

We have learned that if truth is the foundation of the Kingdom of God, then faith, hope, and love are its building blocks. Faith being the first building block is critical; it is the vehicle through which God produces life from the spiritual to and through the physical. It is because of faith that we can have hope and experience His love. And when it comes to faith and the application of our faith, we have to understand that it is all very tangible and it touches on every single aspect of our lives bar none. There are no parts of our physical life that we should consider to be separate from our life of faith. And I say that because we are simply spiritual beings who are encased in the physical. The physical part of our lives is sustained by food, water, and air, but the spiritual part of our existence is sustained by faith, hope, and love. And we must keep in mind that the physical will soon pass away whereas the spiritual will remain forever.

Therefore, faith is to penetrate our lives like the light penetrates the darkness. I am compelled to remind you that without faith it is impossible to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**). Let me say this another way. Without faith you are by default—at least in those moments—living in the Kingdom of this world and devoted to the king of this world—the devil. There is no middle ground. You are either with Jesus or against Him, you are either gathering or scattering and one or the other reality dominates your life. I know we often don't live as if this is a black and white truth; but it is. Faith is the gateway to the heart of God and the building block to a relationship with God. There is no middle ground where you are “ok” with God without faith; faith is a must. And faith is not just some amorphous concept where

you say you believe but you keep living as if you are the lord. If that describes your life, then the reality is that you spend most of your time in the kingdom of this world.

This brings us back around to the “design point” of our Christian lives which comes from **Galatians 2:20-21**: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” The idea is that if God lives in you, if God has access to your body, to your mind, to your emotions, then you will experience all that He is in and through you. As we studied in **1 Peter**, however, the pathway to this kind of life is through the corridors of death—death to all in you that is not God; the putting away of your *Old Sinful Nature*. Only death leads to life (the complete dispossession of all that you are for all that He is); and only life leads to love (God’s *agape* love). But the pathway of death is all about faith. For to survive this journey of death, you must be willing to reject all that you believe is true which has been passed on to you by the king of this world (who we know is nothing but a liar), and practically exchange his lies for the truth (everything which our King has revealed about Himself).

As you make this exchange, Christ will abide in you, He will possess your being and you will know His life and His life will produce His *agape* love (**John 15**) in and through you. And according to **Galatians 5:6**, faith expressing itself in God’s *agape* love is the only thing that really matters. Everything else is just an expression of your flesh (including your religious flesh); and it will do nothing for you in terms of giving you life or producing His love through your life. And without Jesus possessing and filling up your being, you will never know true intimacy, connection, peace,

rest, and satisfaction, for those are only available with Jesus' personhood dwelling in your being. They come with Him. You can search for those things all you want. You can demand them from God and so on, but you will only experience them when you have relinquished your life in exchange for His.

And the most comforting part of it all is that Jesus—the Lord our God Almighty—is the one who gently leads you down the corridors of death and gives you the strength and the ability to die, just like when He told James and John, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized” (**Mark 10:39-40**). If you want God, if you want to know Him and truly experience Him in this life, if you want to understand what His Kingdom is all about, if you are sickened by the kingdom of this world and its loathsome ruler, if you no longer want to call the devil your father, if you are tired of succumbing to and being pounded by the lie, if you are sick of taking and always wanting more and more and more and never finding what you want, then this is the way. And this baptism which Jesus refers to is the same baptism that saves you, which the Spirit talked about in **1 Peter 3:21** when He referred to the floods of judgment and the complete obliteration and decimation of all flesh. And remember, this baptism is an appeal to God for a good conscience—an appeal to God for the design point where He will be the goodness of your heart, mind, soul, and strength and you—your gross flesh—will be dead. This is extreme; this is radical; but it is the only pathway to life.

With all of that in mind, I want to turn our attention to **Luke 18:8** where Jesus asks a very peculiar question. Jesus had been talking about how God will bring justice to His elect—to those who cry out to Him day and night—and He will not delay long over them. But then He asks a bizarre question: “However, when the

Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” The implication is that when Jesus returns, those with faith will be few and far between.” And if you think about the implication of this question, it is staggering and anti-Christian to even consider. In that regard, I had a very strange experience with the Lord two weekends ago. I was looking up some worship videos and came across this worship conference where probably 70,000 people or more were worshipping the Lord and I was really impacted and moved by it; and I know there many of these types of conferences happening all over the world every year where millions are worshipping the Lord. And I thought, wow Lord, look at all this faith. I instantly felt bad over the ways I have thought that there is so little *true* faith in this world. I know, the Lord has been talking to us about the 12 cities and how in each location there is only a handful of truly faithful people who are, as a group, producing the light of His *agape* love. But sometimes that is so hard to fathom with all these people worshipping the Lord. So I was a bit confused because looking at those videos obviously there are so many more. Or is there?

The Lord then reminded me about the time when He came to Israel, to His own people. At this point in time, Israel had done something that it had rarely done throughout its entire history; the people had relinquished all of their idols. There were no more high places, no more worship of Baal, Asherah, Chemosh, Dagon, Moloch, Tammuz, and the sundry other so called gods, demons really, that Israel had worship in years past. They were now a monotheistic country and worshipers of Yahweh, the Lord. They celebrated all the required festivals and honored the high days. In fact, it is recorded by Josephus that based on the number of animal sacrifices, upwards of 2,700,000 people descended upon Jerusalem on Passover;

and they came to worship God. They came with their sacrifices, they went to their services, and they sang, they praised, they worshiped, and held to all the prescribed ways the law said God was to be worshiped.

Their celebrations tower over our worship conferences. Can you imagine a gathering that big? I am sure the entire experience would have been overwhelming and more than impressive: the Temple, the priests, the crowds, the burning flesh on the altar of sacrifice, the wonderful meals, the trumpets, the songs, the readings, and so on. These people worshiped the Lord; and, if you were there, I am sure you would have thought that Israel was a holy nation and all these people loved the Lord. But did they really? What was Jesus' perspective? And keep in mind, Jesus always had a heavenly perspective and His sight was never limited by the veil of the physical. The Father always showed Him what He needed to see and always gave Him understanding of what He needed to know. In fact, He said that His judgment was true because He did nothing on His own initiative, but only that which the Father prescribe; and He never sought His own will but only the will of the Father. He also said His judgment is true because He is not alone in it, but the Father is with Him in judgment (*John 5:30; 8:16*).

Matthew 23:37-39

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and **you were unwilling**. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

Wow, this is shocking. Despite all the religious fervor and worship, Jesus saw all of these worshipers as apostate believers who were unwilling to let Him gather them into His fold. Keep in mind, when it was all said and done, at the most a handful of people were willing to stand with Jesus in the face of death. Millions came to worship God and only a few were willing to stand with the Son of God—a handful, mostly women and John. The rest who had not already left Him simply ran away. And even when those who fled came back to the Lord, there were only about 120 people who were willing to gather in His name (**Acts 1:15**).

We simply must understand and accept the fact that the worship of God does not equal relationship with God; it also does not equal the holiness of God. You see, when it was all said and done, they were unwilling. They did not want to be gathered by Him, they did not want to be hidden under the safety of His wing; they wanted what they wanted and not what He wanted. They wanted God to do things their way according to their wisdom for their lives and they were not willing to submit to His way and His wisdom for their lives. They didn't like it. They loved the experiences they had worshipping God, but they did not really love God for they were not willing to lay down their lives to honor Him and receive His life. This is also clearly evident in the story of the fig tree.

Mark 11:12-14, 20-22

On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry. Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on

it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening...As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. Being reminded, Peter said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered."

The fig tree is a Biblical symbol for spiritual life of the nation of Israel (not the nation or the people, but their spiritual life and spiritual fruitfulness). As Jesus approached this tree, there was no fruit. The leaves made the tree look like it should be fruitful (even though it was not its season for bearing fruit); but one should not be fooled by the leaves. A tree either has fruit or it does not. It is either useful to fill one up and give strength and delicious pleasure, or it is not useful for those purposes. In other words, don't be fooled by the externalities that you see of worship, praise, church going, bible study, evangelizing, and so on. That is not the test of faithfulness (aka pleasing the Lord) and it is not the test of a healthy church. The test is whether or not the tree bears fruit. And as we know, the only fruit that matters is the fruit of God's *agape* love; and that fruit is measured in the quality of relationships not by church activities.

But you simply cannot be a tree who continually bears fruit unless you first die to your flesh—die to all that is within your soul that stands in opposition to the true knowledge of God, including your fear; insecurity; pride; control; rights and demands; the religion that is found at the depth of your soul, all of which is rooted in the good child/bad child syndrome we have all learned about; and so on. Death to these things or said another way, the willingness to trust all that Jesus says about

Himself, is the only way you can live by faith and walk in the Spirit; and if you live in the Spirit you will love. And that is truly the tradeoff of faith: bet your life on Jesus and die so you can live and love or continue to be beholden to the lie that is expressed in your life in so many awful and disgusting ways. The lynchpin to a life of love is trusting in the Lord such that your trust is the Lord. This is true faith.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit.

When you place your trust in the Lord and let Him be your trust, you will always bear the fruit of God's *agape* love. It is what naturally happens. Consider the exchange to which this verse speaks: your fear, your insecurity, your pride, your coping mechanisms, and so on for ongoing fruitfulness, stability, security, provision, peace and rest, and endurance in the midst of difficulty. It is an amazing exchange that can only happen by faith: by letting the Lord be your trust.

As a culture of Christians, we have sadly convinced ourselves that a tree full of leaves is a good thing. We think God is moving because people are busy serving in church, sacrificing, worshiping, reaching out, and doing all manner of church things; but that is simply not the case. It is such a misnomer to think that such sacrifice is akin to dying; it isn't. Likewise, taking care of others in the church is not akin to an

outpouring of God's *agape* love. They simply are not equivalents. I am not saying they are mutually exclusive, just not equivalents.

It is interesting that the tree was cursed from the bottom up. You see, if you cut off the tree at its trunk it will once again, given enough rain and sun, sprout new branches and grow again. But Jesus was cursing this system of religious belief that does not produce the fruit of righteousness—the belief that you don't really need to die, you just need to do it right. It is the lie that you can be good like God. Yet, the truth is clear; there simply is no way to be right with God other than through a life of faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**). And since this tree was withered from the roots, there will be no way it can be restored. It is dead and done. We saw this in **Hebrews 8:13** when the Spirit tells us that in ushering in the new covenant of God's grace, God made the old covenant of the law, which was now decaying and growing old, ready to vanish. And since it is rendered in the *perfect active indicative*, we know that it had been determined and decided by God to vanish; there is no going back; and being in the *indicative* it is a statement of fact. Furthermore, since "disappear" or "vanish" is a noun and not a verb, we can understand the death of this religious system of our own efforts and goodness is a spiritual reality. The Lord was saying that this system is vanished, it is just a matter of time. And sure enough, in 70AD the Jewish system of worship was wiped off the face of the earth by the Romans and it will not be resurrected despite all the modern folklore of a 3rd Temple and so on. It is not going to happen because this system has been vanquished by God.

And the problem with the old system is that it provided a system of religious worship, sacrifice, and service such that the tree looked good, the trunk grew thick,

and was covered in leaves, but it did not produce the fruit of God's *agape* love. So it had to go. The point of all this is we cannot be fooled by a tree with big bright green leaves. But we have been fooled, and we have adopted that old system of worship into the church, and it has replaced true faith. Yet, beautiful foliage does not equal the obedience of Christ which, according to **John 15:10**, is producing the fruit of God's *agape* love. That is the obedience of Christ. And the ability to be a vessel of God's *agape* love comes only through the corridors of death and judgment. We learned this truth in our study of the church of Ephesus and Sardis in **Revelation 2** and **3**. The obedience of Christ is not about being good, it is not about being not bad, serving, witnessing, sending missionaries, reading your Bible, studying, going to Bible School, going to church, serving in church, giving, and so on. The obedience of Christ is pure and simple: it is His divine *agape* love flowing in and through your life; again, which is only possible by faith and is the result of a person choosing to walk through the corridors of death.

This brings us back around to this issue of faith. When I say don't be captured by the beauty of a tree, I am not just talking institutionally, I am talking individually. As I looked at that big gathering of people worshiping the Lord, I sensed God wanting me to shake off my physical eyes and look at this gathering through the eyes of His Kingdom; just like Jesus did when He was looking out over Jerusalem. So I did; I shook and shook and then, as if I was lifting my head up and through that third layer of glass, I could see clearly and I was grieved. "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" He did not ask, "Will He find all manner of religious activity, even praise and worship." No; will He find faith? Faith is the issue. This is the question you need to ask about yourself. You may have plenty of leaves

but do you have the fruit; do you have the evidence that proves you have chosen to live as the **Beloved**.

Recently we received a word from the Lord and it started with **Isaiah 58** which provides us this same message and same warning as the story of the fig tree and the Lord's cursing of the religious system of personal goodness. I am going to be going through **Isaiah 58** and mixing this passage in with the Word which God spoke to us on 8/3/13.

Isaiah 58:1-3

Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Shout aloud! Don't be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me. 'We have fasted before you!' they say. "I will tell you why!" I respond. "It's because you are fasting to please yourselves.

Clearly, God is not impressed by great acts of worship, sacrifice, and service. They do not mean anything to Him. Israel's worship of God did not flow from His life and they did not flow from true love; they flowed from selfishness and wanting what they wanted from God in this world. They did these things to please themselves: to feel good, to feel close to God, to feel something—anything real. Therefore, God asks us to tell His people about their sin. We are told to shout it out loud and not

be timid. I know we have been somewhat reluctant to speak of such things because we for so many years we have been castigated and berated even for having the audacity to think that all the worship, sacrifice, and service of so many sincere Christians was not actually of faith but the acts of a big tree with lots of leaves. But I believe God is going to want our voice to be unrestrained as long as this voice is compelled by humility and love and not just judgment. The Word He gave us began with the following:

Duplicity has marked each and every one of you at one time or another. Remember this in humility and awe before you uncover your brother's nakedness, and then go out with power in humility and water the whole land. You are a spring, bubbling forth life to cover the earth. Jesus is the Wellspring, the Source of all that you have and all that you are.

We know that we flow with God's *agape* love: that is what our light is all about. He has told us so. We know we are a fountain and we leave waters of life wherever we walk. Many of you still have a lot of work to do in terms of dying to your flesh and learning to walk by faith so you can experience this life on a sustained basis, but this body is being led by the Spirit of God and it produces God's *agape* love. God therefore wants us to speak out and to go out in humility knowing that every one of us was previously filled with this religious duplicity. Thus, we are not above anyone, we have been there; but we can proclaim the truth and tell God's people about their sins for we have trudged the hard path through the desert to remove the lie—the duplicity—from our lives. But our having gone through the desert and

landing in the Oasis of His love and joy was a result of our willingness—our willingness to believe and choose to act on faith and bet our lives on all that God says He is. And because we were willing to die and put our trust in Him and let Him be our trust, God met us there. He placed His gracious hand over our lives for it was Him who even gave us the desire to believe and the power to choose. He led us, guided us, provided for us, protected us, and we are in the Oasis because God has determined it so.

All praise and glory belongs to Him—not to us—and we need to remember that. But we have become a light, one of 12, and the Lord is very pleased with us. We flow with His water of life. Wherever we walk, we leave trails of His love that water the land; and we are to water the whole land. We are that spring, and we are to bubble forth with all that is Jesus in us as He is the Wellspring and the Source of all that we have and all that we are. We are therefore to speak the truth and declare the sins of His people and be a source of life to those who want to drink of His water. I want to make note of the fact that it does not say we are to declare the sins of those who live in the world, but the sins of His people. That is our calling.

The rest of *Isaiah 58* speaks of the duplicity in the lives of all those who pretend like they want Him; those who come to the temple acting as if they want to be near Him. It is a picture of a big thick fig tree that does not bear any fruit and will never bear the fruit of God. As we read it I want you to keep in mind that this was once you. Keep that reality in mind and it will ground you in the humility the Lord wants us to have in dealing with others. I also want you to take notice of the promises God makes and see how He has fulfilled each and every one of them in our body.

Isaiah 58:3-14

Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord? "No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then when you call, the Lord will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply. "Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors! Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a builder of walls and a restorer of homes.

Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don't pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the Lord's holy day. Honor the Sabbath in everything you do on that day, and don't follow your own desires or

talk idly. Then the Lord will be your delight. I will give you great honor and satisfy you with the inheritance I promised to your ancestor Jacob. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

This is so sad. God's people live in duplicity. Their worship is not genuine despite all the activity, all the sincerity, and all the hard work which they want God to acknowledge; and they are dumbfounded as to why He doesn't acknowledge it. But everything is done on their own terms and not on God's. You see true worship is an expression of a life which worships; a life which is by definition given over to the Kingdom of God and not the kingdom of this world. It is a life that that is submitted to the Spirit of God. Worship is not just coming together and having an experience; it is a way of life.

We have walked the corridors of death and have found this life of true worship. He has brought to us our salvation—salvation from our selves through the death and putting off of our *Old Sinful Nature*. He has brought to us great healing from the wounds with which He hurt us. He has rubbed His healing balm on all our hurts and pains and has showed us why He did what He did and why He let the kingdom of this world hurt us that way it has. He now is our great protection from the enemy because He dwells in our midst. He does not just protect us from the enemy, He is our protection from the enemy. His very presence in our midst causes the enemy to be unable to implement their plans against us. Our body is covered and the enemy cannot penetrate our protection. As for me personally, I have four angels surrounding me all the time and they are serious and intense and focused on doing

their job. I also have an angel who stands in front of my house with his blazing staff protecting my house. The Lord is truly a protector.

He also answers us when we cry out to Him. We have cried out for so much and He has provided. He has delivered us of sickness, demonic oppression, torment, the victim mentality, religion, and has been there for us every step of the way. He has guided us to each and every victory and has carefully marked out the pathway upon which we are to tread. He has clearly shown us the fights we are to fight and the fights that are His and His alone.

Furthermore, our light now shines in the darkness and the enemy has not only noticed it but he has fought against it. But this light of God's *agape* love is what distinguishes us along with the rest of the 12. He has given us water and refreshed our spirits when we were dry, He restored our strength, and we are now like a well-watered garden with flowers everywhere; like an ever flowing spring. The Lord is our delight and I know He will give us great honor, just as He promised and He will be our complete satisfaction in this life. His promises are coming true in our lives because we have been willing to live by faith and bet our lives on who He is. We have been willing to let Him put our flesh to death.

By faith, some of us have rebuilt the deserted ruins of our cities: we have rebuilt walls and restored cities. We have been the instrument through which God has brought life and redemption to our families. We have fought for these relationships and have done the hard work of learning to live in truth and deal with others in truth. It initially caused a lot of damage as people love the lie and simply did not want us or our relationships to change; but the Lord has led us to rebuild these

relationships in truth, with healthy boundaries, such that despite the former damage and destruction we are now able to love those who had hurt us.

We have also honored the Sabbath. We have understood that we live in the Lord's Sabbath continually and we have set aside and are continuing to set aside our own interests in exchange for His interests. We desire to be with Him in fellowship with one another and we honor Him by coming together, studying, praying, and seeking to do only—only—what He tells us to do. As a result, He has become our delight and we love our times with Him and our times together; and our interest in this world and what this world can do for us has waned and is quickly waning. We live to be with and enjoy one another, to be what God needs us to be for the upcoming war, and to enjoy good wine (ha, just joking).

And all this has come because we have been willing to believe in the name. We have taken serious God's cry for us to bet our lives on all that He has said He is. We have made these decisions despite the fact that everything in our bodies and our emotions fought against us walking the pathway of faith. We are living the life of the **Beloved** and that is something to be celebrated.

The very last line of the Word we received says this: **"Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Know what this means. Behold, He comes!"** At a first glance, we think we know what this means because we have been raised in a religious culture that says if you raise your hand and say a prayer that you are saved. But I don't think that is what it means at all. Therefore, in addition to studying the differences between the kings (*which I hope every single one of you has chosen to do—whether you think you need to or not*), I want you to meditate on this statement and we will pick up with this final line of this Word next week as

it is so critical for us learning how to live by faith such that we might continually dwell in the Kingdom of God.

Let's pray