
3 things



3 Things – Part 1

In our first Podcast, we established the truth that only God is good, and therefore only God can do good. We simply cannot. Our best is still beyond worst. All we do is simply, “not good.” Thus, unless God is the one who does His work in and through our lives, what we do for God, regardless of our intentions, is absolutely worthless to God. **The Source Matters, the Source is Everything!**

The implications of this truth are staggering. This means that everything we do, again regardless of our “good” intentions and sincerity, that does not derive from God doing His work in and through our lives is sin. Yes, everything! When you think about it, it is kind of silly how we get so hung up on the types of sin that comes forth from our lives, when in reality, nothing is as dark and evil as the sin that masks itself as light, as goodness, as godly. Hence, every effort on our part to “stop sinning” so we can be good for God is sin just like all our own effort to please God and do right by Him is sin. I know this is so contrary to all we have heard and followed in the religion of Christianity, but it is the truth which flows from the fact that **Only God is Good!**

I told you the implications were staggering. God is the one who has to transform us, possesses us, by conquering those areas in our life where He has yet to take up rule and authority. And all He requires of us is to let Him – to cooperate with Him – and to not quit.¹

Again, it is imperative that we get our heart, minds, soul, and strength wrapped around the truth that **the Source Matters, the Source is Everything!**

3 Things

This second Podcast is titled **3 things**, because when it is all said and done, I believe there are only 3 critical things we need to believe about God and about ourselves, which if we hold to those three things with our heart, mind, soul, and strength, the rest will work it self out. Think of these **3 things** as the foundation upon which everything else rests.

Christianity can seem overly complex, confusing, and extremely obtuse. After all the Bible is a remarkably big book made up of 66 smaller books, and it says a lot of things in a lot of different ways with idioms galore: pictures, numbers, colors, animals, and so on. Thus, it is far too easy to get confused and overwhelmed that we can miss the core of what God wants us to believe.

In addition, there is so much division within the religion about what we are to believe and what we are to do that our heads and our hearts can spin trying to figure out what we need to do to be right with God, to live in His peace, to find His rest and so on. And it seems that everyone we listen to tells us somewhat of a different story, with different requirements, and different

¹ **Romans 12:2**, “transformed” is rendered in the *passive* voice. God is the one who has to transform our minds.

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formulas for doing Christianity. It's no wonder finding His peace, rest, and joy often seems like searching for an apparition.

As a result of all this, in general, we have a serious trust issue when it comes to God. I say that because as much as we say we trust Him, very few people actually live like a little tiny child assured that they are absolutely incapable of doing anything on their own and must be dependent upon God for all things, all the time.² And who amongst us does not worry or fret, is anxious for nothing, believes that God is for them all the time, whether time past, present, or future, and therefore is at rest in their heart, mind, soul, and strength? Our lives demonstrate that we have a serious trust issue, even though there really are only **3 things** we need to believe in order to live like little children.

Accepting that **Only God is Good** is the first step in sorting through all the mishmash because that truth places the responsibility for what we are to do for God on the back of God. He becomes responsible for our lives, for our transformation, and for our overall spiritual journey. And all He asks of us is to cooperate with Him—to always be found now and continually believing.

Just **3 things**, that is it! If we can get our ourselves settled and secure with these 3 things, our trust issue with God will quickly disappear and we will be on the path to experiencing intimacy with God, abiding in His joy, peace, and rest.

Faith & its Best Friend, Suffering

However, before we get to the “3 Things,” I want to quickly discuss the substance from which everything in our lives must spring forth, and that is **faith**. Faith is the material, so-to-speak, which makes up our ability to be found, now and continually, believing in God. And faith has an inseparable best friend that seems to accompany faith all throughout our lives, and that is **suffering**. Their mates, they travel hand-in-hand, and they work together for the same goal and the same purposes of helping and guiding us toward intimacy and security with God.

Consider this statement from **1 Peter**: “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.”³ What does this tell us about God and about our lives? First, God acknowledges that we have been troubled, and it has come at us from all over the place—“various or diverse trials.”

In the Greek, the word we have translated “trials” literally means putting to proof by experiment. Think about it. This idea of putting something to the test—to prove it out through various experiments—communicates to us **purpose** and **intention**. Therefore, we can know and

² **Matthew 18:3**

³ **1 Peter 1:6**

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be assured that the “trials” we have endured all throughout our lives, and may even now be enduring, are not random, incidental, or accidental; rather, they are part of God’s plan for our lives. In fact, they have been and are fundamentally necessary to our spiritual growth and development.

The Lord also knows and acknowledges that these “tests” continually distress or sadden us. But did you notice that even though we are told to greatly rejoice, there is no correction or criticism over the fact that these trials actually do distress us. The Spirit is not saying that it is a bad thing that these “proofs to test your faith” sadden you and cause anguish; rather, the Spirit is affirming that it is normal and is something to be expected.

Keep in mind, they would not be particularly good experiments to prove out our faith if they did not distress us. Therefore, please do not take the statement, “In this you greatly rejoice,” to be a slap in the face if you are distressed over what you may be going through; that is not the point. Our ability to “greatly rejoice” as a way of life is going to be discovered in and through these distressing trials, not separate from them.

What is God proving out by these “necessary” experiments? It is clear that all the trials and troubles we go through is about proving out our faith. That is the calculated purpose and intention behind our trials. And for some of us, those tests started invitro and for others they started very early on in infancy.

You see **faith** is an interesting spiritual concept. It exists almost as a standalone entity; for lack of better words; it is the vehicle by which we get to experience God. According to *Romans*, all men have been given a measure of faith; thus, this is a spiritual resource which all humanity accesses in one way or another.⁴ But like a muscle, faith needs to be exercised and proven out before a person ever can understand the power and strength that is actually theirs through faith. If a muscle sits idle, it will quickly atrophy and decay within days of inactivity. This leads to weakness, fatigue, and exhaustion.

Therefore, God frequently brings forth these “experiments” to keep our faith strong and capable, because inactivity will result in a degradation of its power in our lives, and we will become spiritually weak, fatigued, and exhausted. Hence, that is why it seems that we are always going through something.

So, what is Faith?

⁴ *Romans 12:3*

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In wrestling though the definition of faith given to us in **Hebrews 11**, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,”⁵ I have come to understand that faith is exercised when we **actively believe the truth**, or said another way, **when we choose to bet our lives upon the truth**. Let’s take a moment to understand each of these dynamics in reverse order.

The Truth

If we actively believe a lie, we may be fully convicted and enthusiastic about the lie, still it will be unable to provide what we hope for, as the lie is empty and powerless. For example, people who place their faith in the things that have been created, man, money, intellect, wisdom, beauty, science, and so on, will be sadly disappointed, for all that has been created decays and is subject to the relentless law of entropy. Nothing that has been created lasts; thus, it cannot ever truly satisfy that part of our soul that longs for the eternal. Thus, true faith is about that which is eternal—it is about God, the one who created all things.

Therefore, we must address truth as God has revealed it about Himself and about our relationship to Him. Now, there are many “so called” Biblical truths out there, so many fictions, but the Holy Spirit’s job is to lead us and guide us in all truth.⁶ And I believe if we honestly ask the Spirit for help, He will guide us in truth.

Believe

We may be in possession of the truth, but unless we believe it or becomes our truth and not just a truth, it is just as powerless as a lie. It is just another option out there for us to consider and muse upon amongst the myriads of things clamoring for our attention.

For instance, if we were to really believe that **Only God is Good**, then that belief would result in some very radical changes in our thoughts, our emotions, and in our relationship not just with God but with people. It has the power to completely reset our spiritual experience enabling us to shed the chains of fear, guilt, shame, and failure.

By way of example, the Israelites whom God delivered from Egypt and the grasp of Pharaoh give us an example of those who had knowledge of the truth, experienced the truth, but did not unite that knowledge with belief. And because of their unbelief, they were not permitted to enter God’s rest and receive the rewards they had been promised.⁷

⁵ **Hebrews 11:1**

⁶ **John 14:17, 16:13**

⁷ **See 1 Corinthians 10:1-5; Hebrews 3 and 4**

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Actively

If we are not willing to bet our lives upon the truth, it becomes nothing more than religious head knowledge, but it will be worthless in our ability to experience and know God. We must therefore bet our lives upon all that God has said about Himself, all that He has said about us, about this world, and about everything else He has revealed.

For instance, if **Only God is Good**, then we must dig down deep in our soul and choose to do nothing for Him and instead choose only to let Him have His way with our lives—choose to let Him put to death and remove every obstacle of wrong belief and unbelief that stands in His way of fully possessing our being. That is what it looks like to bet our lives upon the truth.

Going back to the Israelites, they had a true knowledge of God because they experienced Him physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. They were given a rare view of the enormity of God's power, provision, and presence. They saw and experienced His judgment, vengeance, wrath, and His conquering arm, His protection, His deliverance, His provision, His help, and His defense. They also became awfully familiar with His mercy, patience, longsuffering, and His love. They saw the Spirit of God lead them by day in a cloud and through a pillar of fire at night. They ate of the food of angels, manna, and drank from waters that flowed from the rock that was Christ.

Yet, despite all that they had been shown and personally experienced, they were unwilling to believe that His promises were absolute. They failed to understand that God always does exactly what He says He will do; it is just a matter of time. And refusing to join their experience and knowledge with active belief, they refused to bet their lives on the truth. Accordingly, God swore in His wrath that they would **NOT** enter into His rest.

And the tragic tale of the Israelites is intended to warn us from abiding in wrong belief and unbelief, for, like them, we will also not enter into His rest. Therefore, to have the faith which pleases God, we must be willing to **bet our lives upon the truth!**

Faith's best friend, Suffering

This definition of faith should bring to light why it is necessary that we endure and become distressed by various trials. God is teaching us how to actively believe the truth; that is the goal of each experiment or proof through which He takes us. With each test, He intentionally pushes on another area in our lives where fear is in control and not faith—where we have chosen to be the “lord” of our own lives, taking matters into our own hands on a spiritual, emotional, mental, and a very practically level.

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Each experiment is set up to reveal to us an aspect of God’s character and nature—something about His name in which He wants us to actively believe. Therefore, the situation is set up by our sovereign Lord and with each trial He gives us the opportunity to choose to believe that fear always lies, will never lead us in truth, and always results in bondage. He gives us the opportunity to reject the lies propagated by fear and instead choose to bet our lives on some aspect of His name that He has revealed to us, but which we have been reluctant to adopt as our truth.

God uses these proofs as an opportunity for us to practically know that Jesus is our provider, our deliverer, our defense, our Almighty God, our peace, our shepherd, our guide, our righteousness, the one who is jealous for us that He sets us apart for His sole purposes, and so on—all that His name describes. These are concepts we talk about, we sing about, we read about, and even journal about, but Jesus wants them to be our truth all the time.

The truth is that Jesus wants to possess every area of our lives; and He wants it all, not just a part. He literally wants to be free to live through us as He chooses. He is our Lord, our sovereign, and He wants us to know Him as such. But we are never going to provide Him access to the deep places of our soul unless we actively believe that He is who He says He is, notwithstanding the fact that everything we have been though in this world argues against it.

These trials will naturally distress us since they are aimed at dislocating and removing both the fear which has been imbedded deep in our soul and all the ways in which we attempt to do His job—to play “Lord” of our own lives.

We may not like to admit it, but we are all experts at being our own Lord, in His name of course, and this existence is so entrenched in our being that we are far too often blind to what God wants to accomplish in our lives. We say Jesus is our Lord, but the truth is we all have so much self-protection going on deep in our souls that those are mere words, religious pontifications.

As a result, we keep people out, restrict intimacy, refuse to trust ourselves to others (always for good reason), and we try to make ourselves safe and secure (whether this is at a conscience or subconscious level). The truth is that our self-protection robs us of the life of love and intimacy that God desires us to experience. And self-protection is just one of the many devices we use which supplant the role of God in our lives.

Practically, we do not let Him be our Lord because in reality we do not want Him to be our Lord. As I asserted at the beginning, most of us have a serious trust issue when it comes to God. We do not really trust His methods because we do not like His methods. After all, who likes to be tested, tried, and being led through all manner of difficulties.

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As a result, we do not trust His intentions and are not entirely convinced of His love. We may know with our minds that He loves us, and at times with our emotions, but the pain that is locked down deep in our soul and in our body fights that truth with tooth and nail.

In addition, we are not too convinced that actual goodness will come from all our suffering. Especially when we are in the middle of an experiment, it often all feels so hopeless and discouraging. Great “blessing” (whatever that means) seems more like a wish than a promise.

Truth be told, we have always wanted Jesus to just snap His fingers and change us and have everything be all better, but we have never really wanted to learn how to choose faith. Thus, not only are these trials distressing, but we get extremely mad and angry at God for what He must take us through.

As a little side note, I have to say that as many times as I have told people this truth, that deep inside they are angry at God, I have been told over and over again that I am wrong. They insist that they are not mad at God, but at the people and institutions who have hurt them. But eventually, with enough fire, this anger and mistrust comes shining through. After all, it is a natural response and nothing to be ashamed of, it is part of the process. Why wouldn't we be mad at someone who we have been told is supposed to love us, protect us, tend to our needs, and so on, but instead spends a lot of time hurting us?

I remember going through the thick of my own storm and saying to God: “How can this be love, I would never treat my own kids like this. This is not love, this is cruel, mean, not fair, and I don't like it.” And I meant it.

Of course, I came to realize how ridiculous I was. I did not realize that God was only answering all my prayers and songs which I have sung to have more of Him. And little did I realize that to have more of Him, He had to strongly encourage me to get rid of me. Hence, the storm and the intense suffering.

But it was through this method, through the fires of suffering, that He taught me how to bet my life upon Him. He taught me how to stand in faith and to begin to exercise the power of faith—the power to go through a terrible storm and instead of drowning under the constant beating of the tumultuous waves, experiencing what it is like to ride high upon those waves until they are settled and stilled.

He taught me that it is possible to know His love, His peace, and His rest in the midst of personal chaos. **That is what we can experience when we actively believe the truth.**

The Importance of Faith

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Why is faith so important that God deems it necessary to constantly be working at strengthening and proving it out in our lives? Well, as I said before, faith is the vehicle for our getting to know and experiencing God. And what the Bible says about faith is pretty overwhelming.

First, without faith it is impossible to please God.⁸ Yes, it says **impossible**. Thus, faith is absolutely necessary to be in a healthy relationship with Yahweh.

Second, He declares that the righteous shall live by faith. That means they live not by what they see and what they can figure out with the amazing brains that God has given them, but by what Yahweh says is true about Himself and true about them.⁹ For example, Paul declared, “the life which I know live in the flesh I live **by faith** in the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me.”¹⁰ Faith is how we experience the things of the Spirit.

Third, our hearts are cleansed and sanctified by faith.¹¹

Fourth, we are saved through faith. Yahweh Yasha (the God who sets us free) literally loosens our bonds and sets us free from the bondage of sin, death, and the power of our *flesh* (our old sinful nature that despises God).¹²

Fifth, we are justified or made right with God by faith, literally we are made to be righteous in His sight.¹³

Sixth, faith is how we have obtained our introduction to grace.¹⁴

Seventh, we have obtained our righteousness by faith.¹⁵

Eighth, by faith we receive the promise of the Spirit that we are sons of God clothed in Jesus Christ.¹⁶

Ninth, it is by faith that we profit from the Word of God which has been preached to us.¹⁷

⁸ *Hebrews 11:6*

⁹ *Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38; 2 Corinthians 5:7*

¹⁰ *Galatians 2:20*

¹¹ *Acts 15:9, 26:18*

¹² *Ephesians 2:8; 2 Timothy 3:15*

¹³ *Romans 3:28-30; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:22*

¹⁴ *Romans 4:16, 5:2*

¹⁵ *Romans 9:30; Galatians 5:5*

¹⁶ *Galatians 3:14, 22-27*

¹⁷ *Hebrews 4:2*

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Tenth, it is by faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.¹⁸

Eleventh, it is by faith that we have bold and confident access to the throne of God.¹⁹

Twelfth, it is by faith that we were buried with Christ in baptism and raised up from the dead and made alive together with Him.²⁰

Thirteenth, it is how we are protected by the power of God for a salvation to be revealed in the last days.²¹

Fourteenth, it is how we inherit the promises of God.²²

Fifteenth, whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.²³

This is why the Spirit says that our faith is more precious than gold. It is the vehicle through which we appropriate for ourselves all that God has given to us, all that He has promised us, and all that we need to navigate this life.

Putting all of this together, it is clear that **faith is always active and never passive**, hence, faith is to practically play out in our lives. Thankfully, we are given many examples of this truth because the Spirit wants us to connect to the fact that a life of faith is possible for you and for me. According to *Hebrews*,²⁴ by faith:

1. Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than did Cain.
2. Enoch was taken up or raptured so he would not see death.
3. Noah prepared the ark for the salvation of his household.
4. Noah condemned the rest of the world and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.
5. Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land, for he went without knowing where he was going.
6. Abraham lived as an “alien” in this life, as did Isaac and Jacob, as they were all confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.

¹⁸ *Hebrews 11:3*

¹⁹ *Ephesians 3:12*

²⁰ *Colossians 2:12-13*

²¹ *1 Peter 1:5*

²² *Hebrews 6:12*

²³ *1 John 5:4*

²⁴ *Hebrews 11:3-40*

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7. Sarah was able to have a child though she was barren and so incredibly old—she believed God would keep His promise.
8. Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him.
9. Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons Jacob and Esau.
10. Jacob blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff.
11. Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt.
12. Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born thereby disobeying the king's command.
13. Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Rather, he chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.
14. Moses left the land of Egypt because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible.
15. Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.
16. The people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground and when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were drowned.
17. The people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.
18. Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people of Jericho who refused to obey God. For she had risked her life on God and hid and protected the spies.
19. Gideon went to war against the Midianites delivering the nation.
20. Barak fought against the king of Canaan delivering the nation.
21. Samson waged war against the Philistines all of his life.
22. Jephthah took charge of the nation and went to war against the Ammonites and conquered them.
23. David provided for us a type, an example, of Christ's rule over the people of God and the power and majesty of God's kingdom.
24. Samuel and the prophets brought to us the prophetic words of God despite the dangers of speaking the truth.
25. Others overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. Women even received their loved ones back again from death.

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26. Still others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free; some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips; some were chained in prisons; some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

All these having gained approval through their faith, and not because they did it right for God, not even close. Rather, they all actively bet their lives upon the truth about God.

When we stare at these active expressions of faith, we can start to understand why our faith is precious, priceless, more valuable than gold. The point of this metaphor is to give the bondservants of Christ the perspective of one who does not belong to this world.

The object of highest value and worth in this world is far beneath the value and worth of our faith. That is why God works so hard at proving it out in our lives. He wants us to be like those heroes of old who by faith choose to trust themselves to God and thereby experience His majestic power through our faith.

Besides, gold is perishable, but faith is not. Faith will abide throughout all eternity.²⁵ It will not diminish in value, worth, or power. It will abide. But the best this world has to offer is perishable and is even now decaying. That is why Yahweh wants us to completely adopt a different perspective when it comes to the troubles and distresses of our life (no matter how terrible they may be). We are to endure them because of the glorious deeds God wants to do in us and through us as we give Him access to the deepest parts of our being. And what He does, these are the “good” deeds that will remain and will never perish but will follow us through eternity (after all they are His deeds).

Therefore, we can jump for joy confident that if we let each test have its way in our life, we will be stronger in our faith resulting in our experiencing more and more of God and His amazing power.

As I have been tested and tested and tested, I stand taller and taller and taller. I am becoming like that tree that is firmly planted by living waters; it does not move nor whither, no matter how

²⁵ *1 Corinthians 13:13*

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bad the storm.²⁶ I am becoming like that pillar in the temple of God that is strong and proudly supports all the weight it is given.²⁷

I am seeing this come true in my life and it has given me reason to jump up and down even though right now my faith is being tested. I hate what I have gone through, I do not like what I am going through, I will never forget it, but I am also so thankful for it. Because of my trials and what God has burned out of my life, I get to experience Jesus for real. To me He has become life. He is not just a theology, He is not just a religion, and He is not just my ticket to heaven which I keep in my back-pocket to pull out at the pearly gates. He is my life, and I am strong in Him. That is a work of beauty He has accomplished through faith's best friend, suffering; and in this I can greatly rejoice and jump up and down with joy.

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And with this understanding of what it means to have active faith, I want to address the 3 things that we need to **actively believe** in order to experience the depths of God. As I said at the beginning, Christianity can seem overly complex, confusing, and extremely obtuse. Thus, it is far too easy to get confused and overwhelmed that we can miss the core of what God wants us to believe.

But to simplify it all, I would like to suggest that there are really only **3 things** we need to believe (that is to actively believe) and the rest will sort of take care of itself. These **3 things** cover so much of our relationship with God that if this is where we put our focus and our daily attention, we would find that it is possible to not just experience, but to live in His joy, peace, and rest.

And even though there is so much to understand in the Bible, if we can truly bet our lives on these **3 things**, we will be ok. In fact, we might find that once we are secured in His joy, peace, and rest, the rest of the story, so-to-speak, starts making more sense and the bigger picture comes into view with much greater clarity. Now, let's get to the **3 things**.

- The first thing we need to actively believe is that **Yahweh is the sovereign Lord**, in control of all things all of the time.
- The second thing we need to actively believe is that **Yahweh is good**.
- And the third thing we need to actively believe is that **we are aliens and strangers** in this world.

²⁶ *Jeremiah 17:8*

²⁷ *Revelation 3:12*

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With that as our introduction to the 3 things, we will stop right here, and pick up in our next Podcast as we take a deep dive into the 3 Things we need to actively believe.