

## 1 What is more precious than Gold?

- If there was one thing you could do that would give you the most long-term benefit, what would that one thing be?

## 2 Sermon Review

- Last week we went over how as believers in Christ that our most important asset is our faith.
- The reason why we made this statement was because faith is so powerful.
- Like dynamite, all we need is a little to see mountains move in our lives.
- As Jesus told his disciples, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matt 17:20 NIV)

## 3 Sermon Review

- However, not everyone has “mustard seed” size faith.
  - In fact, the context of Matt 17:20, refers to an incident where Jesus criticizes the faith of the Jews and his disciples by saying, “O unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? (Matt 17:17 NIV)
  - Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” He replied, “Because you have so little faith.” (Matt 17:19 NIV)
- So then, if “so little faith” can be a problem for Jesus’ disciples, can it also be a problem with us as well?
- In fact, could it be our greatest problem in life? If so, what should we do?
- We should do all we can to strengthen our faith because all we need is a little to make major changes for our lives.

## 4 Growing our Faith

- So what things should we do to cultivate and grow our faith.
- Remember that faith is not something that is mystical, but is simply our confidence that God will do what he has promised.
- This happens when we . . .
  - Hear/read what God has done for others.
    - The Bible
    - Testimonies from other believers.
  - Experience God’s faithfulness first-hand ourselves, when we put God’s word to the test with what faith we already have.

## 5 Growing our Faith

- However, we can shipwreck our faith and make it void, if we’re not careful.

- This can happen when we . . .
  - Because of neglect.
  - Set ourselves up for unanswered prayers.
    - We ask amiss.
    - There's major compromise in our life.
- However, the good news is that if we take care of these issues, God's grace and blessings will indeed flow in our lives where we won't be able to contain them all.
- In other words, properly cultivated faith will surely move mountains.

## 6 Signs of Faith Problems

- How can you tell if someone has weak faith.
  - Prayerlessness - people with weak faith don't pray.
  - Words that come out of our mouths - a sure sign of weak faith and unbelief for that matter are individuals who focus on the negative and become pessimistic and skeptical.
  - Worrying, pouting, and complaining.
    - people who don't pray, worry, and
    - people who worry don't have peace, and
    - people with no peace, fret, and
    - people who fret, often do things that makes their circumstances a lot worse.

## 7 Half Truth

- There is a teaching that proposes that the "righteousness of Christ . . . is imputed to [believers] — that is, treated as if it were theirs through faith."
- Thus all the conditions to God's promises are already fulfilled and are "Yes" in Christ (2 Cor 1:20).
- All we need to do is believe and expect to see God's faithfulness.
- However, this is a half-truth and ignores the multitude of scriptures that clearly specify our obligations and conditions.
- Why this is important is because "unfulfilled expectations" are faith destroyers.
- God watches over "His Word" to perform it. So we must fulfill His Word to see His goodness and power manifested in our lives.

## 8 When God Listens to our Prayers

- For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (1 Pet 3:10–12 NIV)
- We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. (John 9:31 NIV)
- Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:21–22 NIV)

## 9 **When God Listens to our Prayers**

- If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; (Psa 66:18 NIV)
- Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, (Prov 1:28–29 NIV)
- The LORD is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous. (Prov 15:29 NIV)
- Then they will cry out to the LORD, but he will not answer them. At that time he will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done. (Mic 3:4 NIV)
- Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. (Jer 14:12 NIV)
- Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them. (Ezek 8:18 NIV)

## 10 **Cultivating our Faith**

## 11 **Cultivating our Faith**

## 12 **Personal Testimony**

- Several years ago, when I surrendered to God’s will, the number one priority I had was to learn about God.
- When I came home from work, I would spend every evening watching Christian TV and then read my Bible.
- I also while driving, I would listen to Christian Radio and play cassette audio recordings of the Bible.
- During lunch, at the office, I would go into one of the storage rooms and read my pocket New Testament.

## 13 **Personal testimony**

- All this helped strengthen my faith in God where one day I stood up to my boss and criticized our involvement in selling “adult magazines” in our stores.
- So grieved was I over this issue that I made it a matter of much prayer. (My motive was that I didn’t want to do anything that would compromise my faith and relationship with the Lord.)
- Then one day while driving to Milbank, South Dakota to see one of my seven stores, I got a call from the Home Office inquiring if removing adult magazines from our stores would hurt sales.

- While I was polite, I basically said it made no difference to me if the sale of these magazines was good or bad, they should be removed regardless.
- One week later, the word came down that all adult magazines should be removed from all SuperAmerica stores – even the Save-Mart stores that were in Kentucky.

#### 14 **Putting God First**

- Now, I'm not going to be so bold as to say, it was my prayers and my prayers only that led to this development.
- But I will say, putting God first and believing that God rewards those who earnestly seek him (Heb 11:6 NIV), does move mountains.
- This is why, I have hope for those who diligently seek the Lord and remain blameless before him.

#### 15 **Promises for the blameless**

- The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight. “To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, (2 Sam 22:25–26 NIV)
- For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. (Psa 84:11 NIV)
- He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, (Prov 2:7 NIV)

#### 16 **Being Blameless**

- Remember, we don't need to be perfect to be in right relationship with God and have our prayers answered.
- However, we do need to be blameless.
- We are blameless before God when we're innocent of wrong doing.
- We are innocent of wrong doing, when we walk according to God's commands and seek His forgiveness when we stumble.
- So then, when we do unto others what we would want them to do to us, and keep ourselves from being corrupted by the world, we should have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask we obey his commands do what pleases him. (1 John 3:21-22)

#### 17 **Evil Under the Sun**

- I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men: God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil. (Eccl 6:1–2 NIV)
- One of things that God gave me while working for SuperAmerica was success and favor from my bosses, without having to work myself to death.

- In fact, the thing I had to work the hardest at was to look busy.
- Often, I was done with all my responsibilities so early in the afternoon that I would get one of my managers and we would play golf or go bowling.
- Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work — this is a gift of God. (Eccl 5:19 NIV)

## 18 **Evil Under the Sun**

- So then, when I see people working themselves to death, because they think they have to—causes me great concern.
- Instead, we ought to be strengthening our faith and focusing on how to please God with it.
- If we're not feeding and cultivating our faith, we may be putting ourselves under more stress than we should.
- To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (Eccl 2:26 NIV)

## 19 **Food for Thought**

- This week I wrote on Twitter and Facebook the following quote:
  - People with strong faith pray, but individuals with weak faith try to fix their problems themselves.
- Personally, I don't know where I would be or what I would do, if I didn't have God to turn to.
- I don't know about you, I need God's help in everything I do everyday.
- It is one thing to be dumb and weak, but it is another to be stupid and act like a fool.
- If we don't prioritize our lives correctly, we could be missing out on a life well spent and blessed by God.
- In other words, most of our life's worries and the time we spend to fix them could all be totally unnecessary.

## 20 **Seek the Lord**

- I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. (Psa 34:4 NIV)
- The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. (Psa 34:10 NIV)
- Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. (Psa 105:4 NIV)
- The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. (Psa 34:10 NIV)
- My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek. (Psa 27:8 NIV)

## 21 **Conclusion**

- For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. (Prov 2:6–8 NIV)
- If we want victory in life, we need to seek the Lord with all our heart, soul, and strength—praying and believing He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- Amen!