

Attitude #8 Faith

I trust in the power of Jesus Christ when I face hardship and trials.
Jesus said: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:10

Hebrews 11:1 - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is in general, the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement or thing is true. Its primary idea is trust. A thing is true, and it can therefore be trusted. Full assurance or wholehearted faith is in accordance with the evidence on which it rests.

So then, the increase of faith is the result of teaching since knowledge is an essential element of faith and is sometimes spoken of in the Bible as an equivalent to faith.

Romans 10:17 - So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

A principal element of faith is the act of our will. We will never believe anything unless we will ourselves to believe it. A person can hear that Jesus Christ died for their sins, be presented with all the historical facts of that truth and yet still live in unbelief. It is sad that many people still reject the truth of Jesus Christ despite all the evidence because of their unwillingness to be open minded.

There is also an element that we might describe as temporary faith; a state of mind that has been awakened in a person by the demonstration of the truth and/or by the influence of someone that is walking in the truth. This is the operation of the Holy Spirit by the grace of God to draw a person to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

John 6:44 - No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

So then, we see that despite the grace of God that is initiated by God to draw us to God, we must still believe God in order to have a relationship with God. All of us can remember times in our lives when we experienced circumstances that caused us to think about God and what He might be able to do for us. They are the very circumstances that God has orchestrated in our lives to compel us to call upon Him in our day of trouble. It would do us all well, when God has finally gotten our attention to allow Him to keep our attention in order that we might begin to experience His intention for getting our attention!!

We have a biblical example of this activity provided by God in the **Book of Acts**.

Acts 24:22-27 - And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. 23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. 24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

“These things” that Felix the Governor of Judea heard were the accusations that were made against the Apostle Paul and his defense for those accusations. Felix was a bad man. He was bad in every sense, and he was corrupt.

What we can learn from his experience and what it teaches us about faith and knowledge.

- 1. Vs. 22 - Felix exposed to the truth. And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he *deferred* (to put back or off, delay, postpone) them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.**

Felix could not plead ignorance to the facts because he was well acquainted with “The Way.” As a Roman official he was aware of the events of the day concerning the Christians and he would have more than likely been investigating them prior to this trial.

These things.....

The accusation:

Acts 24:4-6 - Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. 5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

The defense:

Acts 24:11-21 - Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. 14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: 15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. 16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. 17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. 18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. 19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. 20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, 21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

2. Vs. 23,24 - Felix opens himself up to more truth. And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. 24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

Felix and Drusilla were living proof that birds of a feather flock together. She was an evil woman from an evil bloodline. Her father was Herod Agrippa, and her uncle was Herod Antipas, the man who ordered the beheading of John the Baptist. She married a King named Aziz when she was 15 but soon became unfaithful turning her attention to Felix, governor of Rome. She married him although she had not been divorced or widowed.

What could their motive have been for hearing Paul? We will never know for sure but I would suggest a few that might be common in others.

- Hearing of the truth because of the presentation and not the content.

Sadly there are many who do not mind hearing a sermon when it is presented in such a way that is appealing to their interest but has no affect upon their decisions. Such was the case with Felix and his wife, they were no doubt intrigued by what Paul would teach but as stirred as they may have been they were still not moved.

Hosea 4:6a - My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:

- Hearing of the truth because of the appearance it gives on the outside with no intention of change on the inside.

John 12:47,48 - And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

- 3. Vs. 25 - Felix politely puts off the truth. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled (became terrified), and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.**

Not only was he informed in his mind, but his heart was moved by fear and yet he would not respond to the truth.....no response was his response. Felix had the same option that anyone else has that has been exposed to the truth of God's word; he could either remove himself from the sound of the word or remove the sound of the word from him. In his case, he removed the sound of God's word from him.

Paul's sermon had three simple points:

Righteousness - Yesterday's sin
 Self-control - today's temptations
 Judgment - judgment to come

What did Felix do and how can we avoid doing the same?

- He rejected truth for a "more convenient time".....how would he, or we, know what that time might be?
- He rejected opportunity in order that he might hold on to power.
- He rejected the light to stay in the darkness.

Procrastination is the thief of time! One of these days may be none of these days!

When you are enlightened by the truth of God's word, do all that you can to build upon that which you know in order that you might know more.