

## Maintaining The Faith Luke 18:1-8

- 1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;
- 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:
- 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
- 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;
- 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.
- 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.
- 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?
- 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

This last week as I was reading a Christian publication I ran across a statement that went something like this, **“Professing Christians spend more effort pursuing recreation, entertainment, and worldly pleasures than they do in maintaining their faith.”** In this same article it tells of a survey made among professing Christians and when asked the question, **“Is God the number one priority in your life”** only 22 percent answered **“YES”**. I deduced this has more to do with faith than anything else, so I decided to bring a message on this subject today.

But, there is another statement that complements the first one that I need to include in this message, **“In today’s world many professing Christians attend church looking for religious entertainment rather than seeking a time of Christian growth Godly worship.”**

Consequently, the recreation industry has taken over the entire religious scene. What used to be a time of reverently getting closer to God has become a time of **motivational speakers, secular religious songs, noisy audiences, dancing, and the worship of the God of the Bible gets left out completely.**

This ought not to be so. But we are truly living in the end times. We see Christianity watered down, ridiculed, and hated by the government. Our children are taught that the Bible is made up of fairy tales and make believe, and Christianity no longer has any influence on the laws and behavior of the world.

This is what Jesus meant when He asked. **“When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”**

There is confusion even among the Christians that are trying to follow the Bible and please God. We today get into philosophical arguments about what is right and what is wrong instead of relying of the tried and true Words of God.

I'd venture to say that some who are listening to my voice this morning are confused about the abortion issue. Satan intends to make it confusing, and cause people to doubt the directions God has given us.

There is no reasonable way one can console abortion with the Bible, but the modern day religionist doesn't get too concerned about that. He is only concerned about himself and what he wants.

Gambling is national curse; card playing is a national past time, all kinds of betting is taken over the internet, and practically every state now has a lottery. North Carolina has it because Speaker Jim Black pulled some shady deals to get it through the legislature. His morality has recently come to the forefront, but the immoral lottery is here to stay.

The lottery was born in deception, it thrives in deception, and it will continue to deceive. It will bring big money in for the lottery administrators, and the school systems will see very little of it. I don't get too upset about it because I know how the possibilities of quick riches appeal to the human mind. Get something for nothing is the cry of the masses. Satan knows how to really capitalize on this.

Gambling is sinful according to God's Word, but I suspect that some of you have rationalized the lottery is not gambling, but entertainment. It is just as sinful as any other kind of ungodly entertainment, but some people's faith is not alive enough to know it.

Sunday has become a day of entertainment, not worship. The church has to compete with car races, horse shows, brunches, recreational trips, Dollywood, theaters, fishing, and on and on the list goes. And the church usually gets left out.

If it doesn't get left out completely, it gets put on the back burner. Today attending church has become such a low priority that many only attend if they have nothing else to do. How God can let this continue is beyond my process of thinking.

Faith is the issue. Not faith in nothing, but faith in somebody. Our faith is built on Jesus Christ, our hope is built on Jesus Christ, and our future is built on Jesus Christ. Nobody else has done so much for us and promises us so much and yet we show doubt every time we deliberately move further away from Him; the only source of salvation and true power.

We live in a time when we see the phrase "**Seeing is believing**" taken to the extreme. Even among Christians we find those who are always looking for some kind of tangible

proof that our faith is real. If we could prove our faith, it would no longer be faith but would instead be science.

Jesus had this same kind of trouble when He walked the earth. He even performed many supernatural miracles to prove His Messiahship, but the majority didn't accept Him.

Why did they not accept Him even after witnessing things that only God could provide?

For the same reasons man does not accept Him today; man wants a God he can order around, one that serves him, and only when he wants Him to do so. Jesus brought a real hard challenge to the Jewish nation, a strongly religious people, but they chose religion instead of the Son of God.

The religionists are still among us today. They fall into two different camps.

There are the liberals who claim Christianity and then desecrate its very foundation by seeking out to destroy the truths of the Bible and in doing so have no standard or basis for their beliefs. They claim to be Christians, but are in reality the children of the world. I'll have to admit that they are causing a lot of confusion in the Christian world, and are gaining influence with every new publication and Bible version they bring out.

Then there are the legalists who are so constraining on other Christians that they find fault with everything we do. They have rules for dress, speech, body language, haircuts, and so on to such a degree they make the average Christian miserable. They feel they are right in all areas and don't want to hear from those who may disagree with them.

Faith that has no roots or faith that is built on criticism is not worth much, and both are detriments to the work of the Lord. No wonder Jesus was concerned about finding real faith on the earth when He returned,

### **What is strong faith?**

It is that inner strength that stands up under the worse kinds of adversarial conditions. It knows in whom it has believed and can say with Paul when he was writing to Timothy as recorded in 2Timothy 1:11-12:

**“Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”**

I think one of the basic characteristics of strong faith is, **“It does not try to dictate to God.”**

Too many people want to approach God with a problem and then proceed on to tell Him how to solve it.

The God of the Bible is not a servant, He is the omnipotent one, the creator, the ruler of the universe, yet man in his ignorance will presume to command God what to do.

Job was confronted with a situation not unlike we are, and God asked him in Job 38.

**38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:**

**Job 38:2 Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?**

**Job 38:3 Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.**

**Job 38:4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.**

**Job 38:5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?**

**Job 38:6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;**

**Job 38:7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?**

God still asks man today the same kinds of questions; who are we to question Him. Since when does the creature question the creator? We need to get our relationship with God deep in our minds and be prepared for anything life may send our way, always standing on our faith.

## **Signs of strong faith**

### **I. The first sign is: Faith in the Word of God.**

When Jesus told the centurion in Luke 4:50 that his child was cured the Bible says, **“the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him.”** He no longer desired a sign; he could now rely upon the simple Word of God.

Coming into personal contact with Jesus and hearing His Word, caused the nobleman to have stronger faith. **“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”**

So, there is something in this Word — a living something which goes with it and helps us to believe. The Bible is different from any other book on the face of the earth. It is vital, it is living — and this fact is impressed upon those who read it.

Jesus said to this father, **“Go thy way; thy son liveth.”** And he believed what the Lord said . . . no proof, no signs, and no written contracts.

In this day of chaos, this day of rockets and modernized living, there is one sure thing to which we can anchor, and that is the Word of God. It is sure, unchangeable, and forever settled in heaven.

When I say, **“The Word,”** I am talking about the King James Bible for the English-speaking world. No other English Bible will fit God’s requirement for preservation accuracy, and evidence of soul saving.

The Bible says in Psalm 119:89 says: **“For ever, O Lord, thy Word is settled in heaven.”** All hell shall not prevail against God and His Word. His Word is a sure foundation, a sure anchor, and we can depend upon it!

Never until we get to heaven will we understand the great importance of the Word of God.

Every phase of our Christian living points to the Word.

All we know about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is found in the pages of the Holy Bible.

All we know about heaven, hell, and the hereafter, we find in the Bible.

It is through the Bible that we learn we are sinners, bound for a sinner’s hell. Also that there is a Saviour to save us, and how we may be saved.

After we are saved through the Word, it is through the Word that we have victorious Christian living. **“And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (I John 5:4).**

## **2. Another sign of strong faith is: Restfulness.**

When God tells us something, we accept it as a fact. We don’t have to question God’s motives, desires, or abilities. When God promises something, He does it. This is better than seeing, this is better than hearing, for it is a sure thing.

In Isaiah 26:3 we are told: **“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”** There has never been such an age of hurry as there is today; but we, too, can rest in the promises of God. **“He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isaiah 28:16).**

## **3. A third sign of strong faith is: its Readiness to Receive God’s Answers as from GOD, and Not Give Credit to Anyone Else.**

Sometimes when we have a prayer answered, unbelief whispers in our ear, **“This might have happened anyway.” Or, “This is a remarkable coincidence, and would have happened even if you had not prayed for it.”**

But strong faith stands ready to give God the praise and to confirm to others by testimony that it was a direct answer to prayer.

**4. The last sign of strong faith that I will mention is: Willingness to Receive Spiritual Blessings.**

There is record after record in the Bible of those who went to Jesus seeking temporal blessings, the healing of a body, but then received much more. They received the healing of his soul. Such is God's way of dealing. He knows how to give above all we ask or think.

I now appeal to every one of you who have been blessed of God in body, in family, in any respect. Will you not in gratitude give your hearts to Christ if you are not saved? And if you are saved, will you not fully give Him your life, your all?

The faith that seeks the spiritual is greater faith than that which seeks only the temporal. Where do you stand? God help you to check up . . . and spiritually to grow

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