



FAITH UNDER FIRE

MID-WEEK WORSHIP & STUDY

FALL SEMESTER 2020

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NAME: _____

"Faith Under Fire"

Mid-Week Worship & Study | 2020 Fall Semester

Text: The Book of Acts

Main Point: The Church of Jesus Christ was designed to operate in a season of intense pressure.

Objective: The goal is to prepare the saints of God to live effective lives while dealing with the pressures of life. The fire must not destroy purpose but reveal and refine purpose.

THE BACKDROP OF FAITH

Mankind can only connect to God by the means of faith. We read, "Now the just shall live by faith..." Hebrews 10:38 and "without faith it is impossible to please God..." Hebrews 11:6

There was a time when the connection to God was not by faith. Adam and Eve's connection to God was just based upon relationship. God met with them and they met with God. The introduction of sin into the world broke the relationship.

The connection for us to get to God is through the lens of faith. Man's struggle has been to maintain faith or to maintain the level of faith that is pleasing to God.

THE CONCEPT OF FAITH

Why is faith so important?

Faith pushes us to see beyond the capacity that sin has imposed upon us. Hebrews 11:1 *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

Faith provokes us to view life as God views life. We cannot operate above the level of our faith. Faith puts a demand upon that which has not yet been realized. Faith expands our capacity. Therefore, it is always connected to some type of tension. The tension is between the present and the future; what is and what is to come. According to Romans 5: 24 and 25, *"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it?"*

It takes faith to move from your current position to a better position. There are many obstacles designed to hinder us from moving in faith. And yet, it is in those hostile environments that faith displays it's best strength.

It is safe to say that faith and tension go together. Remove faith, and the tension goes away. Remove tension, and faith then becomes unnecessary.

Tension must not be viewed as just physical obstacles or negative people. Tension should be seen as the soil that helps the seed to produce its fruit and, eventually its harvest. Seeds need a hostile environment for them to grow.

While the seed is in its nice, neat package, it cannot and will not reach its fullest capacity. It is the tension of the soil that causes the seed to expand and push through to and above the soil that brings it real life.

We must change our concept of faith. Faith is for the season or seasons of difficulty. Removing the tension actually removes our opportunities to grow through and above that which could hold us down. Please remember, every seed that is planted does not always produce fruit.

THE CRITIQUE OF FAITH

As loving and patient as Jesus was, His frustration with His disciples was basically around the subject of faith. And His greatest joy was when He came into contact with faith.

Let's view the contrast of faith through the eyes of Jesus.

Matthew 6:30 "*... O ye of little faith?*"

Matthew 14:31 "*... O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*"

Matthew 16:8 "*O ye of little faith, why reason among yourselves?*"

Matthew 8:10 "*I have not found so great a faith, no, not in Israel.*"

Matthew 9:2 "*Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy: son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*"

Matthew 9:22 "*Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.*"

Matthew 9:29 "*... according to your faith be it unto you.*"

Matthew 15:28 "*... O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee as thou wilt.*"

Jesus taught them about faith:

Matthew 17:20, "*...if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place and it shall be removed; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*"

Mathew 21:21, *Jesus answered and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."*

The critique of Jesus was clear. Those who were closest to Him lacked faith and those who just heard of Him operated in faith. Could the disciples' proximity to Jesus prevent them from fully operating in faith?

Jesus was always challenging His followers to operate in faith. Every situation is designed to be a faith situation.

Matthew 17:14-21, Jesus returned from the mountain and found his disciples in a strange situation. A father asked Jesus why could not His disciples cure his son? Jesus' reply was, *"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me."*

Later on the disciples asked Jesus the question, *"Why could not we cast him out?"* Jesus told them, *"because of your unbelief..."*

Jesus knew before He went to the mountain that the situation was going to occur while He was away. And yet, Jesus allowed it to happen. Could the lesson be that sometimes we learn to seek faith after we have failed? It was their inability to help the father and his young son that pushed them to operate in faith.

In Luke 10:17, the report of the seventy disciples was quite different than the twelve disciples. They told Jesus, *"...Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through your name."*

This text also reveals the hostile environment in which faith must operate. Luke 10:3, *"Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves."*

SUMMARY

If we understand the backdrop of faith, the concept of faith and the critique of faith, then we can embrace the idea that faith will match whatever challenges we face in life.

As much as we preach, sing, teach and talk about faith, faith is meaningless until it is able to withstand the fire. It is the heat of the fire that reveals and refines the true nature of faith.

The Book of Acts

Faith for the New Testament believer is grounded in the foundational work of Jesus Christ. It was the actual life, death and resurrection of Jesus that paved the way for the New Testament saints to form what Jesus called "THE CHURCH."

Jesus' departing Words in Matthew 28:18-20 were a clear indication of the task that would be before His followers.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.'"

"The Great Commission" could only be made possible by a divine transfer. The deposit of the Holy Spirit in the disciples' lives was for the purpose of them operating in the same power that Jesus had. It would take faith for them to carry out the mandate of Jesus.

One of the names for the church is the Household of Faith. The birth of the Christian Church took place in an upper room in a house. Why were they meeting in a house? The climax for the young believers was in a very hostile environment. All odds were against them. The political powers (**Rome**) was taking over the entire world and the religious leaders (**Jewish**) were not happy with the ministry of Jesus. Therefore, anyone associated with Jesus would be killed just like Jesus.

The young believers were hiding in the upper room and all they had was a promise from Jesus that He would send them another Comforter.

Just like the early Christians, many of us are afraid and all we have is a promise. It is going to take faith to activate our promise.

A study of the Book of Acts will reveal the tension that the church endured and how their faith kept them advancing the cause of Christ. It is without saying that their "Faith was Under Fire."

The Book of Acts was written by Luke, the physician. The thematic overture is Acts 1:8.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Most Biblical scholars agree that the Book of Acts is basically divided into two sections:

- The ministry of Faith from within. Acts 1-12
- The ministry of Faith from without. Acts 13-28

These two sections are so important developmentally because the success in personal maturity is directly connected to corporate effectiveness. History has taught us that a chain is no greater than its weakest link.

The gap between receiving the power and reaching the world would be their exercise of faith.

Here is an Outline of the movement you will find in the Book of Acts.

Outline

- I. Introduction To The Beginning of the Church (Acts 1)
 - A. The Lord Prepares the Disciples (1:1-11)
 - 1. The Reaffirmation of the Promise (1:1-5)
 - 2. The Re-orientation to the Program (1:6-8)
 - 3. The Ascension and Predicted Return (1:9-11)
 - B. The Lord Re-establishes 12 Apostles (1:12-26)
 - 1. The Apostles and Others Gathered in Jerusalem (1:12-14)
 - 2. The Motion of Peter to Choose another Apostle (1:15-26).
 - a. Judas' apostatizing fulfilled the Scripture (1:15-26)
 - b. The criteria for an apostolic replacement
 - c. The Method of choosing (1:23-26)

Bible.org (reference)

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Outline

- II. The Church in Jerusalem (2:1-8:3)
 - A. The Church is Born (2:1-8:3)
 - 1. Pentecost
 - a. The Coming of the Holy Spirit (2:1-4a)
 - b. The Sign:Tongues (2:4b-11)
 - c. The Reaction: Mixed (2:12-13)
 - 2. Peter's Explanation in a Sermon (2:14-36)
 - a. Pentecost: The fulfillment of Joel 2 (2:14-21)
 - b. Pentecost: Based upon Christ's Work (2:22-25)
 - 3. The Reaction to Peter's Sermon (2:37-41)
 - a. People cut to the heart (2:27-40)
 - b. 3000 saved (2:41)
 - B. Summary of The Young Church (2:42-46)
 - 1. Unity among the people (2:42-46)
 - 2. Praise to God from the people (2:47)
 - C. The Church Ministering in Jerusalem (3:1-8:3)
 - 1. A Sign to Israel: A Lamé Man Healed (3:1-11)
 - 2. A Warning to Israel: Peter's Sermon (3:12-26)
 - 3. The Reaction: Persecution (4:1-37)
 - a. The animosity of the religious leaders (4:1-22)
 - b. The prayer for boldness (4:23-31)
 - c. The continuing unity of the Church (4:32-37)
 - D. Struggles from Within and Without
 - 1. The deceit of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11)
 - 2. The Sanhedrin and the Apostles (5:12-42)
 - a. The Apostles respected by people (2:12-16)
 - b. The jealousy of the leaders (5:17-42)
 - 3. The first racial tension in the Church (6:1-7)
 - a. The Problem (6:1)
 - b. The solution (6:2-6)
 - c. The result (6:7)
 - E. The Climax of the Persecution in Jerusalem: Stephen Killed (6:8-8:30)
 - PIVOTAL PERSON #1
 - 1. Stephen brought before a council (6:8-15)
 - 2. Stephen's sermon (7:1-53)
 - 3. Stephen's death (8:1-3)
 - F. The Church is Scattered (8:1-3)

Bible.org (reference)

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Outline

- III. The Church Scattered into Palestine and Syria (8:4-12:25)
 - A. The Ministry of Philip (8:4-40). Pivotal Person #2
 - 1. Philip in Samaria (8:4-25)
 - 2. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26-39)
 - 3. Philip en route to Caesarea (8:40)
 - B. The Conversion of Saul (9:1-30). Pivotal Person #3
 - 1. Paul sees the Lord (9:1-9)
 - 2. Ananias Ministers to Paul (9:10-19a)
 - 3. Paul Proclaims Jesus as the Christ (9:19b-30)
 - C. A Summary Report of the Church (9:31)
 - D. The Ministry of Peter (9:32-11:18)
 - 1. Peter in Lydda: A man healed (9:32-35)
 - 2. Peter in Joppa: A woman healed (9:36-43)
 - 3. Cornelius' Vision (10:1-8)
 - 4. Peter's Vision (10:9-16)
 - 5. Peter Goes with the Men from Cornelius (10:17-22)
 - 6. The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit (10:23-48)
 - 7. Peter Defends himself Before the Jerusalem Church (11:1-18)
 - E. The Church at Antioch: A New Center of Operations (11:19-30)
 - 1. The Church established (11:19-21)
 - 2. The Church Sanctioned by Jerusalem (11:22-24)
 - 3. Barnabas Brings Paul Back to Antioch (11:25-26)
 - 4. The Unity in the Church: Antioch to Help Jerusalem (11:27-30)
 - F. God Continues to Protect Jerusalem (12)
 - 1. James put to Death (12:1,2)
 - 2. Peter Delivered (12:3-17)
 - 3. Herod put to Death (12:18-21)
 - G. A Summary Report of The Church (12:24,25)

Bible.org (reference)

Here is an Outline of the movement you will find in the Book of Acts.

Outline

- IV. The Church Advancing to the End of the Earth (Acts 12-28)
 - A. The First Missionary Journey (13,14)
 - 1. The Holy Spirit set Paul and Barnabas Apart (13:1-3)
 - 2. Cyprus and Proconsul (13:4-12)
 - 3. Pisidian Antioch: Paul's Sermon & the Reaction (13:13-52)
 - 4. From Iconium to Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe (14:1-7)
 - 5. Lystra: A Lame Man Healed & the Reaction (14:8-20a)
 - 6. The Return to and Stay at Antioch (14:20b-28)
 - B. The Jerusalem Council (15:1-35)
 - 1. The Problem: Those from Syrian Antioch (15:1-5)
 - 2. The Discussion: The Argument from James (15:6-18)
 - 3. The Conclusion and Application (15:19-35)
 - a. The Consensus among the Leadership (15:19-22)
 - b. The Letter Written (15:23-29)
 - c. The Letter Delivered to Antioch (15:30-34)
 - 4. Paul and Barnabas in Antioch to Teach (15:35)
 - C. The Second Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
 - 1. Paul and Barnabas Disagree on John Mark (15:36-40)
 - 2. Syria and Cilicia Revisited (15:41)
 - 3. Paul/Timothy in S. Galatia to Deliver Council's Decrees (16:1-5)
 - 4. From Galatia- Mysia- to Troas (16:6-10)
 - 5. The Work in Philippi (16:11-40)
 - 6. The Word at Thessalonica (17:1-9)
 - 7. The Work in Berea (17:10-14)
 - 8. The Work in Athens (17:15-34)
 - 9. The Work in Corinth (18:1-17)
 - a. Paul's Work in the Synagogue (verses 1-6)
 - b. Paul's Work at the House of Titus Justus (verses 7-11)
 - c. Paul Charged by the Jews (verses 12-17)
 - 10. Paul in Ephesus en route to Antioch of Syria (18:18-22)

Bible.org (reference)

Here is an Outline of the movement you will find in the Book of Acts.

Outline

IV. The Church Advancing to the End of the Earth (Acts 12-28)

D. The Third Missionary Journey (18:23-19:19)

1. Paul in Galatia and Phrygia (18:23)
2. Apollos Goes from Ephesus to Corinth (18:24-28)
3. Paul in Ephesus (19:1-41)
 - a. The Twelve Men (verses 1-7)
 - b. In the Synagogue & School of Tyrannus (verses 8-10)
 - c. God Confirming Paul's Message by Miracles (verses 11,12)
 - d. Seven Sons of Sceva (verses 13-17)
 - e. Mass Repentance (verses 18,19)
 - f. A Summary Report of the Church in Asia (verse 20)
 - g. Paul's Statement of Hidden Plans: Jerusalem & Rome (verses 21,22)
 - h. Demetrius and the Riot in Ephesus (verses 23-41)
4. Three Months in Greece (20:1-5)
5. Paul's Sermon & Healing at Troas (20:6-12)
6. Paul's Words at Miletus with Ephesian Elders (20:13-38)
7. Paul at Caesarea with Philip the Evangelist (21:1-14)

E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-26)

1. Welcomed by Brethren (21:15-26)
2. Arrested by the Jews (21:27-40)
3. Paul's Defense (22:1-21)
4. The Response of the People (22:22-29)
5. Paul before the Sanhedrin (23:1-10)
6. The Plot Against Paul (23:11-22)

F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-26:32)

1. Paul Escorted to Caesarea (23:23-35)
2. Paul before Felix (24:1-21)
3. Paul Imprisoned (24:22-27)
4. Paul before Festus (verse 25)
5. Paul before Agrippa (verse 26)

G. Paul in Rome (verses 27,28)

1. The Shipwreck (verse 27)
2. Paul in Malta (28:1-15)
3. Paul in Rome (28:16-31)

Bible.org (reference)

It is so important that the New Testament believers immerse ourselves in our spiritual history. The Book of Acts should be to the New Testament believer like the Old Testament Pentateuch is to the Jewish Nation.

We will cover the following topics:

- Faith and The Holy Spirit
- Faith and A New Identity
- Faith and Healing
- Faith and Trouble
- Faith and Freedom
- Faith and Deception
- Faith and Division
- Faith and Death
- Faith and The Conversion of Others
- Faith and Cultural Biases
- Faith and My Assignment
- Faith and My Ending

I. Faith and The Holy Spirit

Acts 1-2:5

The disciples loved Jesus and had given up everything to follow Jesus. The death of Jesus was unbearable for them. Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus was unexplainable for these feeble followers of Jesus. How were they to carry on the work of someone who had only appeared to just a few people?

It would indeed be that a power that was greater than their own power could convey such a message. According to Acts 1:2, it was through the ministry of the Holy Ghost that they were given commandments. Jesus' connection to his disciples was based upon the Holy Spirit being their mediator.

Jesus was an all Spirit being by the time of the books of Acts. The disciples had to operate in faith so that they could see the promise come alive. (Acts 1:4-5)

"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

The tension in the text was a spiritual manifestation. Jesus was talking to natural minded disciples. The conversation of Jesus; baptized with the Holy Ghost and the disciples conversation; will you at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?

SPIRITUAL VS. NATURAL

The Holy Spirit had to intervene so that the disciples would not target their faith just on natural things but on super-natural things.

James 2:26

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

The work that activates the connection of the Holy Spirit to the disciples:

1. They went to the upper room.

2. They continued with prayer and supplications.

3. They embraced holistic ministry.

4. They rehearsed the scriptures.

5. They tightened up their leadership.

Their work prepared the groundwork for the Holy Spirit to make His permanent entrance into their lives.

Acts 2:1

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

The entrance of the Holy Spirit was described as:

- A sound (_____)

- A rushing mighty wind (_____)

- Cloven Tongues of fire (_____)

- (_____) sat upon each of them (_____)

- The Holy Spirit made them fit to properly receive divine communication (_____).

It is so important that we do not activate faith without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. If we do, then we will reduce faith to going after just natural things. This is called carnality.

Can you name a carnal moment for the disciples?

II. Faith and A New Identity

Acts 2

All Bible scholars agree that the Church was born in Acts 2. The concept of the church was laid in Matthew 16:16-18. The first members of the church were all Jewish believers, but now with the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, they took on a new identity.

Now, it would take faith in the complete work of the Holy Spirit to sustain their faith. Their new identity would be:

- Set apart

- Mocked

- Misunderstood

Activated faith will always push you beyond your comfort zone. The message of Peter made him the first to defend not just his faith but the faith of this infant church. (Acts 2:14-40)

Peter was already known for speaking out and living on the edge but now the transformed Peter could operate with a depth that would convert souls to the Kingdom of God. (Luke 22:32)

A new identity reflects a transformation. Transformation is only sustainable when faith is activated.

Transformation – a metamorphosis during a cycle; a change in composition or structure.

Spiritual Transformation – a fundamental change in the pathways the individual takes to the sacred or holy.

We often talk about the metamorphosis of the caterpillar but we only focus on its physical changes. The changes are so much deeper!!!

Peter never lost his boldness in his transformation. He became that rock that could help anchor others.

Peter's Message:

- Defended behavior of the Church

- Lifted the prophetic words of the scripture

- Pointed persons to Jesus

- Revealed the sinful actions of man

- Exposed the power of God

- Connected their Jewish history to the present

- Informed them of Jesus' position

- Called them to repentance

How is your new identity reflected in your faith?

Their new identity brought about a commonality among them:

- Equality

- Fellowship

- Worshipping

God honored them by adding to them.

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