

THE FAITH EXAM

ATTENTION: (How God Tests Faith)

In Matthew 9 Jesus is approached by 2 blind men who want to be healed and Jesus says too them in v. 29 *Let it be done for you according to your faith.*

That is a great principle for the Christian's outlook of life.

- What are you expecting God to do in your life?
 - It has a name: It's called *The Law of Expectation*.
 - The fact is, we tend to get what we expect out of life.
 - We tend to see what we expect to see.
 - ...hear what we expect to hear.
 - We tend to feel the way we expect to feel.
 - We inevitably accomplish what we expect to accomplish.

Another important verse on faith in the Bible is [Hebrews 11:6](#). *Now without faith it is impossible to please God*

- God's pleased when we trust Him.
 - The principle of faith goes so far as to say in [Romans 14:23](#) that *everything that is not from faith is sin*.
 - In other words, if what we do is not motivated by our faith then it is wrong for us to do it.
 - So it is important that we ask, *"How we grow in our faith."*
 - After being seriously challenged by Jesus in [Luke 17](#) the disciples respond to Jesus in v. 5 with, *Increase our faith.*

ATTUNE: How do you do that?

- *I'd like to have more faith. I know you'd like to have more faith.*
 - The question is how?
 - If faith is what makes my life pleasing to God, rewarding and fulfilling I want it!
 - Can't take a vitamin that will increase faith
 - There is no therapy to grow faith
 - No gym to workout in that will build faith muscles either.
- Here is the secret **BUT** you're not going to be real excited about it when you first hear it!
 - God builds our faith by testing it.
 - ...by putting it to the test, trying it.
 - Faith is like a muscle and when it's stretched, and it's pulled then it develops.
 - You don't develop your faith just setting on your blessed assurance in church.

² Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.
James 1:2-4

- Every day your faith is being tested.
 - This past week your faith was tested
 - This afternoon your faith is going to be tested.
 - Every choice, decision, challenge, victory as well as defeat can be a test of faith!
 - Part of the problem is, we don't realize it's a test and God is trying to help us grow.!

TRANSITION:

So if God wants me to live by faith and if God builds my faith by testing it then the natural question is how does this work?

- Over the next couple of weeks we will look at 4 common ways God tests our faith so we can be more aware of what is happening.
- You'll likely be tested by all 4 frequently.

BODY:

God Tests Our Faith Through Difficulties

Trials, problems, pressures, tough circumstances – life stresses.

- As the recipients of Peter's letter were experiencing trials he urged...

⁶ You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials ⁷ so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:6-7

- The trials, problems and difficulties that come into your life come to test your faith, to prove faith.
- Everything that occurs in life is Father filtered.
- I'm not saying God plans all the bad things that happens.
 - He doesn't have to.
 - We live in a broken world.

- Also, a lot of problems we bring on ourselves.
 - ...other people bring on us and we suffer.
 - But, nothing comes into your life if you're a child of God without God's permission.
 - God uses the things that come our way as well.
- Sometimes God has to customize a problem to teach us faith as well as test it.
 - Jonah had a custom-made problem.
 - The great fish swallowed him for dinner! Got his attention!
- Here's a great verse when you're going through tough times.

*I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.*
Isiah 48:10

 - What is the furnace of affliction?
 - For Israel it was their captivity in Babylon.
 - For you it is trials you go through
 - It's when the heat's on, a real test.
 - How are you doing in the furnace of affliction?
 - Have you felt it this past week?
 - Are you under pressure?
 - The Bible frequently compares our problems and difficulties to a furnace - a refiner's fire – burning impurities away.
 - What should I do when going through difficulties?
How should I respond?
 - Remember our text:

*² Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters,
whenever you experience various trials, ³ because you
know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*
James 1:2-3

 - He says when you're having trials relax!
 - In fact, he says, REJOICE.
 - Take it easy. Thank God. Praise God.
 - Why? Because you know God is with you.
 - God has a plan for you.
 - He has a purpose for your life and He's going to help you be prepared.
 - God's purpose is greater than the pain or the challenge or the difficulty you go through.

- If we're going to live by faith we must learn to joy continually.
 - To *Consider it all joy when you go through problems.*
 - Notice he doesn't say be thankful for the problems.
 - God doesn't expect you to thank Him for bad life.
 - Like, "Thank You God, for this cancer."

PROJECT:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:4-7

Paul practice what he and James said we should do in hard times.

¹⁷ But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me.
Philippians 4:17-18

Trials take on many forms:

- We may be slandered, our human ambitions crushed
- ...ostracized, maybe a thorn in the flesh
- There could be personality issues, unrequited love, joblessness,
- domestic heartache, waves of pain...
- Suffering comes in many shapes and sizes!

If you are going faith's test, you're not alone.

- You need to pray, "Father, help me to learn to rejoice continually because I know You're in control. I know I'm not alone. I know You have a purpose and I know You will give me the strength to make it through. Lord, I want to grow in my faith with you at my side"

A story is told of a town where all the residents are ducks. Every Sunday the ducks waddle out of their houses and waddle down Main Street to their church. They waddle in and squat in their pew. They quack their songs, then the duck minister comes forward and reads the duck Bible, "Ducks! God has given you wings! With wings you can fly! With wings you can mount up and soar like eagles. No fences can hold you! God has given you wings, and you can fly!" All the ducks shout, "Amen!" **And then they all waddle home.**