

Strong-in-faith/Weak-in-faith

I. FAITH IN WHAT?

A. SIMPLE FAITH

1. Unfortunately it can take time for faith to become simple in our modern convoluted Christianity
 - a) There are a lot of hurdles to jump, so I felt like it was needed to touch on this.
2. We need to put faith in the cross, alongside the hope it brings, so we can walk worthy and be accounted righteous before God on the last day, thus inheriting the kingdom, resurrection, and eternal life.
 - a) Clinging to the cross while setting our eyes on the age to come.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Stay alert, stand firm in the faith, show courage, be strong. Everything you do should be done in love.

Galatians 5:5

For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness.

Colossians 1:5

Your faith and love have arisen from the hope laid up for you in heaven, which you have heard about in the message of truth, the gospel

2 Timothy 4:7-8

I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith! Finally the crown of righteousness is reserved for me. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will award it to me in that day - and not to me only, but also to all who have set their affection on his appearing.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.

1 Peter 1:3-7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, that is, into an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is reserved in heaven for you, who by God's power are protected through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. This brings you great joy, although you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials. Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold - gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away - and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

II. GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

A. PEOPLE ARE A MESS

1. We do life with people. Or at least that's the aim. And in doing that, things do get messy.

a) Sometimes I think we expect there to be no mess. That's a pipe dream. The mess is part of maturing in the Lord and revealing immaturity.

(1) Many look at their theology and calculate maturity. I look at a person's life and how their theology is lived out. And from that calculate maturity.

B. DO NOT FLINCH

1. Game we used to play as a kid. If you flinched, then the one who caused the flinching got to hit you in the arm.

a) People are going to throw all kinds of doctrines and theologies at us. Let us not flinch, but in love, respond correctly.

James 3:17-18 (in context to the tongue)

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

2. The truth of the gospel is so key. But truth without love could push some who are genuine, away, and ultimately lead them to a lake of fire on Judgement Day.

Ephesians 4:15

But practicing the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.

C. LEARNING TO LOVE PEOPLE THE WAY GOD DOES

a) There are many who will choose "blind guides" in this age and follow false doctrines with itching ears. That has been going on for some time and is happening now more than ever.

b) But if we do not have a love for people despite where they stand in their belief system at the moment, we surely will not deliver the truth the way it was intended.

(1) God is merciful and compassionate to us. When we genuinely see and receive that regularly, thanksgiving will follow, leading us to extend the same to others. To the level we receive is the level we can then give.

2 Corinthians 4:1, 3-5, 8-10, 14-18

Therefore, since we have this ministry, just as God has shown us mercy, we do not become discouraged. ... But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing, among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ... We are experiencing trouble on every side, but are not crushed; we are perplexed, but not driven to despair; we are persecuted, but not abandoned; we are knocked down, but not destroyed, always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our body. ... We do so because we know that the one who raised up Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus and will bring us with you into his presence. For all these things are for your sake, so that the grace that is including more and more people may cause thanksgiving to increase to the glory of God. Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary, light suffering is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

- (2) We have to rise above the mess, be renewed day by day, stand firm in the truth, and live/communicate as a faithful witness in love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

- c) Truth can be delivered with love and still come as a rebuke, correction, etc. However, the goal is not to convince or change everything with some Messianic complex. Our goal is to obey the living God and remain faithful to what He asks us to do. Listen and obey.
 - (1) How people respond should not dictate how we function or what we do. "Just as God has shown us mercy, we do not become discouraged."

III. SUFFOCATING OTHERS WHO ARE WEAK

A. JET AIRPLANE

1. Brothers would get frustrated with me and force "jet airplane" on me, smothering me to the point of retaliation.
 - a) Great example of how it can be in our varying relationships with those who are weaker in faith.
 - (1) If we are strong in faith, we can smother others in what we understand, think, know or how we live, causing them to struggle and want to run away.
 - (2) We then can be frustrated, upset, etc when they kick, flail and run away. Leaving us hurt and/or discouraged.

IV. DISCIPLESHIP 101

A. LEARNING TAKES TIME

1. Especially if someone learns the wrong way at first.
 - a) I lived 29 years before finally feeling like I was understanding the gospel and it's purpose. And prior to that, I had 20+ years of things that I had heard and grown up with related to my belief system.
 - (1) It took time to unravel quite a few wrong ideas about God and His mission. It took hard work. I couldn't "cliff note" the process. I leaned in and am so thankful.
2. Thankful for those who were patient with me over the years. I was incredibly weak in my faith and thankful for the grace that was given by others.

B. PRACTICE GRACIOUS PATIENCE

1. My brother's were very impatient with me and got frustrated super easy.
 - a) Thankful for those along my journey who were so patient with me

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to him and said, "Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother who sins against me? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy-seven times! "For this reason, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. As he began settling his accounts, a man who owed ten thousand talents was brought to him. Because he was not able to repay it, the lord ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, children, and whatever he possessed, and repayment to be made. Then the slave threw himself to the ground before him, saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything.' The lord had compassion on that slave and released him, and forgave him the debt. After he went out, that same slave found one of his fellow slaves who owed him one hundred silver coins. So he grabbed him by the throat and started to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe me!' Then his fellow slave threw himself down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will repay you.' But he refused. Instead, he went out and threw him in prison until he repaid the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were very upset and went and told their lord everything that had taken place. Then his lord called the first slave and said to him, 'Evil slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me! Should you not have shown mercy to your fellow slave, just as I showed it to you?' And in anger his lord turned him over to the prison guards to torture him until he repaid all he owed. So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if each of you does not forgive your brother from your heart."

C. ANYONE CAN BE A PESSIMIST

1. My brother's had locked in their minds that I was annoying even when I probably wasn't trying to be. Their lens was locked in and it dictated their daily actions.
 - a) When we expect the worst, we will always see the worst.

V. KNOWLEDGE PUFFS, LOVE BUILDS

1 Corinthians 8:1, 6-13

With regard to food sacrificed to idols, we know that "we all have knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ... yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we live, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we live. But this knowledge is not shared by all. And some, by being accustomed to idols in former times, eat this food as an idol sacrifice, and their conscience, because it is weak, is defiled. Now food will not bring us close to God. We are no worse if we do not eat and no better if we do. But be careful that this liberty of yours does not become a hindrance to the weak. For if someone weak sees you who possess knowledge dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience be "strengthened" to eat food offered to idols? So by your knowledge the weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed. If you sin against your brothers or sisters in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. For this reason, if food causes my brother or sister to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not cause one of them to sin.

1 Corinthians 13:4

Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up.

VI. GO LOW

A. TRYING TO BE RIGHT CAN BE WRONG

Romans 14:1, 5, 12-13, 15, 18-19, 22

Now receive the one who is weak in the faith, and do not have disputes over differing opinions. ... One person regards one day holier than other days, and another regards them all alike. Each must be fully convinced in his own mind. ... Therefore, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore we must not pass judgment on one another, but rather determine never to place an obstacle or a trap before a brother or sister. ... For if your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy by your food someone for whom Christ died. ... For the one who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by people. So then, let us pursue what makes for peace and for building up one another. ... The faith you have, keep to yourself before God. Blessed is the one who does not judge himself by what he approves.

VII. BOTTOMLINE

A. BE AWARE...

1. ...of your heart. Humility or pride?
2. ...of where others are at. Assess properly as you process with them about the Lord. Be patient and know that it is a journey to be strong in the faith.
3. ...that not everyone is going to grow in their faith the exact way you do/did.
4. ...of the traps we can fall into as we grow in our understanding of the Lord and His Word.