

# FAITH, HOPE, & JOY

You've emailed a few requests and I'm happy to respond. Here are the following questions:

1) You had referenced Philippians 3:7 or 8-11 a few weeks ago. Preceding verses can also apply. Some focus on faith, what we count on, and its value. Knowing Christ and how that can redirect our focus.

- Philippians 3:7-11 "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."
- Colossians 1:3-14 "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."
  - But, like the parable of the sower - our hearts must be ready and willing. The soil must be good to accept the word of God.
    - "Lord, increase our faith!" Did Jesus say, "Read some more of Moses' writings." No - they were looking to put more trust and belief in Jesus. Now, could the writings confirm who Jesus was? Yes. And that's part of the puzzle. But, they had something we don't - a miracle performing Jesus in their midst. You and I don't. So, how do we increase our faith? That's a decision we have to make based on the evidence before us. In other words - do we believe the Bible to be God's word. If so, it goes from there. Also, do we see the fruit of Christianity. This can be more subjective, but it helps me. In other words - if everyone were to practice it's principles, it's a good kind of people to be around.
    - Luke 17:5-10 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to

this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. "Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.' "

2) Heb 11:6- please God with your faith, but what do we do when we struggle with our faith? Is he not pleased with us? How do I help my unbelief in practical ways? When you read the word, pray, and worship, but you still struggle. If faith is the foundation of hope, what is wrong when I struggle to have hope? How do I increase my faith? And then is it a matter of just doing more so that I will have more faith so that I can have more hope. Heb 11:1 and on.

- Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
- Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- Romans 8:18–25 "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."
  - Let's not forget what the passage goes on to teach. We pray to God for help and the Spirit intercedes!

3) Along the line of suffering.... how do we find joy in trials?

- Jeremiah 29:1-14; *Ecclesiastes* 9:1-12; Hebrews 12:1-12
  - You have to choose joy. Some of the exiles were there because of their sin. They were being punished. But their children suffered. Either way, they were in unfortunate circumstances and had a choice to make. Will I get on with life or become paralyzed?