

TODAY’S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor / Opening Prayer by: Bobby Rader
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch
#869 We’re Marching to Zion
#874 Walking Alone at Eve

Scripture Reading by: Matthew Girard
#313 The Old Rugged Cross
Communion Devotional by: Zach Arthur
Lord’s Supper and Contribution

#867 To Canaan’s Land I’m On My Way
Sermon: “Hard Times ”
Acts 14

#852 When the Ross Is Called Up Yonder
#864 Where the Gates Swing Outward Never
Closing Prayer by: Gus Tristan

*We will be viewing the series
The Chosen at 5:00 p.m. in the
fellowship room*

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Aug. 7, 2022

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

Galatians 5:1

This is a Test

It hardly seems possible, but summer is essentially over—not in the technical meaning with its unrelenting heat, unfortunately, but in the sense of the break in the calendar. Teachers went back to work here this past week, and most students in the area begin this week. Some of you—parents in particular—may be looking forward to that. Maybe even some of the kids are, too. But if you are anything like I was in grade school, you definitely are not. I had senioritis from the time I was about 8. I hated school. I hated sitting through classes. I hated having to do homework. And I hated taking tests.

Even though we often fail to see it at the time, though, tests, at their best, are not just arbitrary academic exercises in futility. They are designed to be beneficial to us, to help us learn and grow. That is worth noting because sometimes God does that very same thing. In fact, we find God giving that kind of test all through Scripture.

God presented Abraham and Sarah with a wonderful gift in their old age: a son, Isaac. But later, God tested Abraham. He said, "I want you to take your son Isaac, and offer him as a sacrifice on the mountain." This test was really for Abraham’s benefit, not God’s. God knew Abraham’s heart, and He knew Abraham loved Him. But God wanted Abraham to know just how far he was willing to go in trusting God. And Abraham passed the test. **(Gen 22)**

God allowed Satan to afflict Job and put him to the test. Job was the wealthiest man in all of the east, blessed with a happy family. But all of that was taken away in an instant, to see if Job would still serve God. This test was really for Job’s benefit. God knew that he was blameless and upright. But he learned to trust in God and his rule of the world in a way he had not before. Job passed his test. **(Job 1-2, 42:1-6)**

One of the most vivid tests in the OT involved Jonah. God gave Jonah a test, but unlike the previous examples, Jonah failed. Instead of going to Ninevah, as God had directed, Jonah fled in the opposite direction. And it was not until he was caught in the storm and then in the belly of the great fish that Jonah repented and God was able to use him. The test was for Jonah’s benefit, not for God’s. **(Jonah 1-2)**

We read in the NT that Jesus tested Philip the day he fed the multitudes **(Jn 6):** *where will we get bread to feed all of these people?* And he tested Peter on the seashore after the resurrection, asking him, "Do you love me, Simon? Do you really love me?" **(Jn 21:15-19)**

Now if we were asked, "Do you love God?" I imagine that most of us would answer, "Of course!" It is easy to say that we love God, so long as we don’t probe any deeper than that. But Scripture does probe deeper, and it asks more questions of us. While all of these examples are very specific, personal tests, the Bible tests us as well. Consider just one example: *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!* **(2 Cor 13:5)**

Our Sick

Russell Godby fell last week and broke his pelvis in 2 places.

Continued Prayers

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Tina Garcia, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ka'Leisha Jones, Linda Frank, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Susan McCain, Gary Nielsen, Ann Rogers, Evelyn Coleman

Shut Ins

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique, Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Deacons meet today at 4:15 p.m.

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Aug. 8th at 6:30 p.m.

We will have a meal on Wednesday, Aug. 17th at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, Aug. 18th at 8:00 a.m.

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>	<u>Minister</u>
Ken Coleman	Zach Arthur	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

Paul says to examine yourself—give yourself a test: are you in the faith? If Christ lives in you and impacts the way you speak and think and act, the answer is “Yes.” But if those things are not Christlike, if they show that Jesus is not living in you, then no matter how much you may say you love God, the answer is, “No.” You have failed the test.

I do not want to fail that test. I don't want to come to the end of my life and discover that I'm not “in the faith.” I imagine you do not, either. I certainly don't want to be one of whom Jesus spoke in **Matt 7:21-23**: *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'* On Judgment Day, some people claiming to be Christians will hear Jesus say, “I never knew you.” How can that be? Doesn't God know everybody? Of course; but he is not saying, “I don't know who you are.” Rather, in the context of a relationship in the Bible, that word “know” means “to be very close, to be intimate.” So Jesus is saying, “You never came to me. We were never close.”

So what must we do to make certain that we are “in the faith?” To make sure that we never hear the words, *Depart from me, for I never knew you?* Thankfully, the Bible is pretty clear about that. In fact, **Isaiah 35:8** (KJV) prophesies God will make the way of holiness, the way of salvation, so plain that even *even if they are fools they shall not go astray*. God has made the way of salvation simple enough for us to understand and follow. To begin with, it says we must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But in talking about faith **James 2:19** says, “*Even the demons believe - and shudder!*” They are certainly not in the faith – they're lost, and they know it.

So there is more to faith than simply believing in Jesus. That is the point that Paul is making when he writes about Jesus living in us. If we believe in Jesus Christ, we must make Him Lord and Master of our life. That decision is essentially what is called repentance. It simply means that we turn around and start going in God's direction. We were going our own way, and now we turn our lives over to Him and begin trying to live the way God wants us to live. That is not a popular message today; we are much more likely to hear that God loves and accepts us just the way that we are. The result is that there are lots of people who claim to follow Jesus who are just as dishonest, greedy, immoral, whatever as they were before they came to him. If you cannot point to some obvious changes God is making in your life, then you're failing the test; faith always brings about definite and sometimes dramatic changes in our lives due to repentance.

The Bible also teaches that if we have a living, dynamic faith, we will express it in obedience. There is no such thing from the standpoint of Scripture as a disobedient faith. Jesus said, “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*” (**Jn14:15**). *This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome.*” (**1 Jn 5:3**) One way that we do that is through baptism. When we think of it in this light, those old debates on whether it is essential or not are misguided. Because He has commanded it, we will be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. All we have to decide is whether we're willing to obey God or not. Our submission to his command will take care of the subject of baptism.

We also will not be ashamed to proclaim our faith in Him. And we will proclaim it not just in a confession that we make one time only: our very lives will be a testimony that Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Lord. I will confess Him with my lips. I will confess Him with my work. I will confess Him with my lifestyle. In everything I do, I will be giving a testimony that Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life.

Now have we passed the test? Are you in the faith? Can you say that Jesus Christ is living in you and that He has made a definite and positive change in your life? Do you keep his commandments? Do your very actions confess that he is Lord? Or do they confess that something else is Master of your life?

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

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