

Faith and Purity

part 13 of Serving Jesus Together

January 14, 2018

We are continuing our series in the Bible book of 1 Timothy this morning. We have been camped on one verse for the last two weeks and will finish that verse today. I have been encouraging you to make a change in YOU in one of the categories listed in this verse.

This is the time of year that many people resolve to make changes in themselves. I read several articles this week about the lack of success in keeping resolutions. One survey revealed that only 9% of people keep their resolutions the whole year through. Several reasons were given for the lack of success.

One is that we want to see big results quickly. However, big changes are harder to stick with than small changes. I have been encouraging you to make one small change instead of several big ones. You have a greater chance of success with a small change.

A second reason many people fail to keep their resolutions is that they are working at them alone. They don't have a helper. They don't have a support group. There is no one else working to make a similar change.

The kinds of changes I am suggesting are things God wants us to change. Therefore all of God's resources are at our disposal.

First, we have the Holy Spirit working in us. You and the Holy Spirit can work on these changes together. The power for these changes comes from the Spirit.

Second, we have each other. God brings us together to teach, encourage, and support each other in these changes. Share with another Christian the change you are hoping to make and encourage each other through this next year.

Let's go now to the text. Paul is teaching Timothy how to lead God's people. It isn't by verbal persuasion. It isn't by physical force. It isn't by intimidation or manipulation. He is to lead by the example of a growing Christian character.

1 Timothy 4:12, 15 (NIV) Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity... Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

Be an example in faith. Be growing in faith. How could Timothy do that? We need to know so that we can do it too.

The basic idea of faith is trust. **Faith is trusting in something or someone.**

All of us live by faith. We live by faith in someone or something. We live by faith in more than one.

You live by faith in people. You have faith in your family. You have faith that they will care for you, help you, and support you. You have faith in your friends.

You live by faith in people. You also live by faith in systems. You have faith in our system of police. You have faith in our various governments. You have faith in the local systems.

You also live by faith in organizations. You have faith in your church family for some things. You trust in your bank. You trust the grocery store and restaurants to provide food that is safe to eat.

And fourthly you trust in resources. You trust that the traffic lights are working properly and if you have a green light the people to your sides have red lights. You have faith in your car or truck. You have faith in your skills. You have faith in your bank account and investments.

Each day you leave your home trusting in these various people, systems, organizations, and resources. You trust that these are working in your favor. You trust them to fulfill their responsibilities, commitments, obligations, and duties. That is why you live the way you do. Your faith in these provides a basis of security for you to live your life. If you did not think your bank was trustworthy, you would put your money somewhere else.

So you already know how to live by faith. You do it everyday. God is calling us to add to the list of those we trust in.

God is calling us to trust in Him, in His promises.

God has made promises to us. These promises include the gift of righteousness, a right relationship with God, heaven, eternal life, glory, help to repent of sin, and freedom from the power of sin over us. All of these promises God has made to us in Christ Jesus.

Most of us already trust in God to some extent. Yet, like Timothy, we can grow in faith. Let me suggest what a growing faith looks like.

What a growing faith in God looks like:

Faith lives in the joy of God's promises.

The Christian's joy is not based on current life circumstances. You could be living in a shack and have Christian joy. You could be in prison and have this

joy. This joy is an attitude we adopt because of what God has promised. Forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven are all reasons to be joyful. We can choose to be joyful even though we have not seen the reality of these yet. We are not yet in heaven. But we can believe that we will be and choose to be joy-filled now.

Faith lives in gratitude for God's blessings.

We can give thanks all day, not just in the morning or on Sundays. As you live in the awareness of what God has promised, as you experience His presence, as you see His power changing you, there are many reasons to be thankful. Gratitude should be expressed all day long as you experience His blessings.

All day long, when someone does something nice for you, don't you say thank you? If someone holds a door for you, don't you say thank you? Sure you do. You feel gratitude and you express it.

In the same way, as you enjoy good spiritual and worldly things during your day, get in the habit of giving thanks right then. All day long recognize what God is doing in your life and give Him thanks.

Faith lives with calm instead of worry.

A strong faith in God will mean less worry. Despite what some of you believe, it is NOT your job to worry about your children. Your worry accomplishes nothing. It is your job to teach them about praying your life, and theirs, into God's hands each day. Then go out with confidence that you are in His will.

God has promised us a glorious future that nothing can destroy. And it will be so much greater than anything on earth, that you need not worry about losing what you have on earth.

So how do we grow in our faith in God?

1. Focus more on the promises of God.

Spend time this year reading the New Testament to record specific promises to all Christians. Not all promises in the Bible are to Christians. Most of the Old Testament promises were to Israel as a nation, not to Christians as individuals. Many of them show the heart of God. They reveal the character of God. But they are not to be taken as general promises to us who are in Christ Jesus.

Even New Testament promises might be to an individual, or to a non-believer, or to the church in general, and not to all individual Christians. You have to discern who the promise is to from the context of the promise.

But there are many promises to learn and enjoy. You might focus this year on doing so.

2. Seek to live more in the presence of God.

Jesus told His disciples, “Never will I leave you.” That was made true when they received the Holy Spirit. We too have received the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comforts us, teaches us, leads us, guides us, convicts us. We are never out of God's presence. We have been adopted by God into His family. And He makes this plain to us as we spend time with Him in prayer and reading the Bible.

3. Believe more in the protection of God.

He does not promise you won't get hurt financially or physically. He does not promise you parents, siblings, or children will live a long, healthy life. He does not promise your house won't burn down and destroy all the stuff you have collected.

He DOES promise to protect you from the evil one, to give you strength to resist temptation, to never leave you. He does promise that nothing will happen to you without His consent.

Remember that the governor, Pilot, threatened Jesus. Jesus told him he could do nothing to Jesus outside of God's will. The same is true of you.

There was a Christian soldier some years back, serving in Afghanistan. Each day before he went on patrol, He prayed his faith in God. He went out wary, trained, but unworried, believing that if he died, it was God's will, and if he lived, it was God's will. He was satisfied with either. He was not cocky or careless. He was confident and calm. The same should be true of us whatever we are facing each day.

4. Be satisfied more with the provision of God.

This means to cease striving for more and more of the world's things. Be satisfied with what God has already provided you. God will provide whatever you need in order to be obedient to Him. He will provide what you need in ministry. He will provide wisdom for decisions. He will provide insights and illustrations for teaching.

You can, and should be growing in faith. This may be the area you focus on this year. Or it may be the next one.

1 Timothy 4:12, 15 (NIV) “...set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity...”

Set an example in purity.

Purity calls for a high moral standard in heart, mind, word, and action.

Ephesus was a city given over to sexual immorality, yet Timothy was expected to maintain a pure standard to the Christians there. There was to be no vulgar, obscene or profane words in his speech, no dirty stories or double meanings, there was to be no sexual misconduct nor pornography. He must have a chaste relationship to the women in the church and keep himself pure in mind, heart, and body.

We too must strive for pure thoughts, daydreams, and meditations. We must form a heart of pure desires. We put only pure things in our mouths and minds, pure things for our eyes, pure things for our ears. We must not hinder purity in each other by our dress, words, or behavior. We must not dress to be sexy, to allure, etc.

It may be something in this area that you need to work on, to repent of, this year.

These are changes God wants all of us to make. Pray about which area to work on first. What one, small change, can you make in that area. Make this a priority in your prayers each day. God wants this. The Spirit is ready to work in and through you. Make this a matter of prayer.

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Possible Resolutions for 2018 (choose one)

I will start each day praying myself into the joy of God's promises.

I will start each day praying myself into gratitude for all God has provided and promised.

I will start each day praying myself into confidence and out of worry, placing my life fully into God's hands, believing in His presence, power, protection, and provision.

I will read the New Testament this year, recording God's promises to me.