

Have we Passed the *Faith* Test?

Faith occurs 247 times in the Bible. Faith must a serious matter.

Saved us

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

Hebrews 4:2 *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

Walk by faith

2 Corinthians 5:7-8 *(For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

Sing- Living By Faith in Jesus Above- really

Substitutes for faith

I am trying to see how this coronavirus fits into the plan of God. I have been looking for a needle in a haystack. All I can say is that it came from the abyss of hell. Anything that hinders the advancement of the Gospel to the world and the worship of the saints is of the Devil and not from God. Spoke to a lady Friday whose son ministers in California. The leaders in that state have placed more stringent requirements on churches than on bars.

President Trump said yesterday: “Some states have made bars and abortion clinics essential and the houses of worship non-essential. He declared this WRONG- “open the houses of worship.”

God does not have his hand on social media- he has it on the local church- God does not have his hand on Facebook- he has his hand on the local church.

I see one good from coronavirus- it is a trial for the true believers. There are three facets to my life- pastor of local church, director of

World Bible Missions, and Christianity. It is hard to practice Christianity in this environment. Can't visit the shut-ins. Can't visit the sick in the hospitals. It is hard to speak a word of kindness to a weary soul with a mask on standing six-feet away. Christianity is on hold.

Missions is locked down. Gospel mail packages are being returned by the postal system- no delivery, COVID-19. Try later. Country closed to incoming mail. Mail carriers are at home refusing to carry mail due to virus.

The church is crippled. Social distancing. Ten at a time. And on and on.

If the virus is a test of the believer, we have failed miserably:

* I have not heard God mentioned- we want a pill. We don't need God. I want a vaccination. I want a cure. I don't need God. I want a doctor.

* I have heard of not one call for prayer, much less a called prayer meeting.

* No one has said "I am going forward. God will take care of me. He is responsible for his children."

* No one has said "let the king heat it up 7-time hotter, we are going forward."

* No one has said "let the king throw me in the lion's den. I will walk with God." Daniel refused to eat the king's meat.

* No one has said "if God be for us, who can be against us." "We are more than conquerors through him that loves us."

We have failed the test! We have said God is smaller than a microscopic organism.

Let us re-introduce ourselves to faith and see if we can get back on track

(Turn to Hebrews 11)

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

a) What is faith?

I want to focus on 4 words: substance, hope, evidence, and vision.

* Substance and evidence:

Substance and evidence go hand-in-hand. Substance is something real, not imaginary, not a fable. Substance is when granny fixes says “I am going to bake a chocolate cake,” and you can taste it before it comes out of the oven. Your tongue starts to poke the roof of your mouth and then goes a little further and tickles your brain. You begin to salivate. That taste in your mouth before the cake is baked substance.

Evidence is real, not a dream, not imaginary. You walk in the kitchen and see flour on the counter top. You hear pans rattling in the pantry. You have not had one bite of chocolate cake, but you have substance and you have evidence that there is cake on the way. We are not stumbling in the dark. Walking with God is not Russian roulette.

Jesus said “I can raise Lazarus, but first I need to see some substance and evidence. If there is faith in Bethany, if there is faith around this tomb, if there is a cake in the oven, I want to see the evidence and the substance “roll that stone away.” Wow! over the stone went. Jesus did the rest.

“Woman, do you believe the prophet or do you want your sons taken as servants by the creditors.” “Go borrow every vessel your neighbors will allow you to borrow.” Great, Almighty God did the rest.

A woman with an issue of blood perhaps crawling, pushed her way through a crowd for Jesus “was thronged.” “Sir, mam, please move over and let me pass. If I can get to that man named Jesus, I know by simply touching him, I can he made whole.”

God, we don’t need you. We need a vaccination, a pill, a cure. We don’t need God. We need a stimulus check. We need

unemployment pay that is more than what we earn if we work. We need \$129,000.00 for our hospital that has been closed for over a year. Coronacircus.

God is good. Maybe we can't muster and substance and evidence. Maybe our faith is weak and it is. So, good and gracious God put a chapter in the Bible in writing that is filled with substance and evidence. Isn't God good! When we can't muster any substance and evidence necessary for us to hope and see, God give us Hebrews 11.

For the sake of time, we can't go through all this chapter. Will you please read it at home? It can strengthen your faith. I can give you the substance and evidence that your and my weak hope and weak vision cannot produce.

We begin with the elders verse 2, Abel verse 4, Enoch verse 5, Noah verse 7 (I know Abraham is the father of faith, but God bless Noah), Abraham verse 8. The women get in on it- Sara verse 11 and Rahab verse 31.

I hope I can pay the rent next month- the evidence is that God enabled me to pay it this month.

I hope I get home safely- the substance and evidence are that I have made the trip 100's of times before.

Substance and evidence are plentiful.

* Can God save my lost husband? He saved you. He saved my drunkard brother-in-law and made him a deacon on the front row.

* Can God feed me? Your over-weight now. God prepared a table in the wilderness.

