

## **'RIGHT & READY!'**

### ***(Sunday Bible Study Series – 'Ready or Not, Jesus Is Coming!')***

#### **Studies in 1 Thessalonians**

#### **Faith-fuel**

The recent hurricanes that clobbered Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico devastated those areas, turning them into wastelands, compared to what they once were. Most recently, blasted beyond belief was Puerto Rico where the destruction left no part of the Island without major devastation. But when storms pass, then begins the hard work of relief and clean-up which will take months and years to complete. Clean-up and restoration can only happen if you have the equipment needed for such a project, and of course, lots of fuel to run the vehicles doing the job.

The first priority is all the basic human needs: treat the injured, feed the hungry, and get water distributed ASAP! But even then, all vehicles need fuel to operate, move people, and resources as soon as possible. Fuel is foundational to maintenance before disasters happen, and, also afterward, to restore things quickly after a storm passes. How frustrating it must be to possess perfectly good equipment ready to go, but no fuel in their tanks to do anything!

In the Christian life, our faith is the high-octane fuel that energizes a person to come to Jesus, keeps them living for Christ after salvation, and empowers them to recover from the storms of life certain to happen from time to time. Faith, like fuel, should be built up in spiritual reserves when times are good, to be there when the weather of life changes for the worse.

Faith is the spiritual fuel given as a gift of God to anyone He is drawing to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation (***Ephesians 2:8-9***). This gift is an awesome power, not only for coming to the Lord for salvation, but in also maintaining a holy Christian life, serving God, and overcoming all adversities the enemy throws at us (***1 John 5:3-5***). God affirms that a believer's faith is crucial to a victorious Christian life that pleases Him (***Hebrews 11:1-2***). In fact, He warns Christians who slack off in building up their *faith reserves* that their *low octane* faith is the real reason they can't please Him in anything they try to do (***Hebrews 11:6***). **James** also warns Christians about the fact that when they are *leaking faith*, the empty space in their heart gets filled with *doubts* that are as bad for a believer's mind and soul as *water is to gasoline* (***James 1:6-8***).

Too many believers try filling their minds and hearts with substitute fuel of *religious fanaticism*, *spiritual mysticism* and even *musical emotionalism* instead of biblical faith found only in God's Word. As Scripture is pumped into the believer's mind and heart through prayerful study of God's Word (***Roman 10:17, Jude 20***), no room is left for doubting. Scripture intake is the way God refuels and builds up a faith reservoir with *life giving words* filling the disciple of Christ (***Hebrews 4:12***). Without refueling our faith daily, we are certain to weaken spiritually and morally, be impotent in ministry, and *run out of gas* eventually. We may coast for awhile, but in the end, we'll be parked off on the shoulder of the *straight and narrow road leading to life* (***Matthew 7:13-14***), unprepared for the next coming storm (***Proverbs 1:24-33***).

In **1 Thessalonians 3** the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul implores the new church, full of new Christians how to maintain the *gift of faith* given to them in the beginning (***3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10***). God had *breathed into them divine spiritual faith* like He breathed physical life into Adam in the beginning (***Genesis 2:7***). As Adam rose from the dust with new spiritual energy and life, with all new believers they, too, raise from their dirty old life prior to Christ when they receive God's gift of *faith* into their souls at salvation.

But that is just the beginning. Faith is consumed in living daily for the Lord and needs replenishing through daily devotions, Bible study, and fellowship in a church where God's Word restores faith in all who attend. As faith reserves are built up in the heart of all committed to serious Bible study, other wonderful extra benefits happen:

*“...also for this reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if all these things are yours and abound you will neither be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ... you will make your calling and election sure... you will never stumble... an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-11).*

Which of the above personal traits do you want and need? Please notice that the progression starts with your *faith*. That miraculous gift was free from God in the beginning for you to build upon the rest of your life. Faith is what brought you to Christ, faith is what will transform you into His image, and faith will get you home into His presence. As the old hymn says, *“Faith is the victory that overcomes the world”*. PtL

## **‘The Care & Feeding of Your Faith’**

*(Understanding the Primary Purpose of Church – Building of Your Faith)*

**1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:9**

### **Faith Needs Connection**

*“But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time, in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore, we wanted to come to you – even I, Paul, time and again but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”*

**2:17-20**

### **Faith Needs Consolation**

*“Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy our brother and minister of God, our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before, when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.”*

**3:1-5**

### **Faith Needs Completion**

*“But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you – therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. What thanks can we render to God for, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?”*

**3:6-10**