“Do You Believe that God is Good?” (하나님이 좋으신 분이라는 것을 믿습니까?)

*James 1:2-8*

*Sang W. Sur*

*Lord’s Day, November 27, 2011*

*James 1:2-8 (NLT)*

*2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.
5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. 6 But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. 7 Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.*

2 형제 여러분, 여러 가지 시험을 당하더라도 그것을 기쁨으로 여기십시오. 3 믿음의 시련은 인내를 만들어낸다는 것을 아십시오. 4 그러므로 끝까지 참고 견디어 부족함이 없는 완전하고 성숙한 사람이 되십시오. 5 여러분 가운데 누구든지 지혜가 부족한 사람은 하나님께 기도하십시오. 그러면 꾸짖지 않고 모든 사람에게 후하게 주시는 하나님께서 주실 것입니다. 6 그러나 믿음으로 구하고 조금도 의심하지 마십시오. 의심하는 사람은 바람에 밀려 출렁거리는 바다 물결과 같습니다. 7 그런 사람은 주님에게서 무엇을 받으리라고 생각해서는 안 됩니다. 8 그는 이중 인격자이며 언제나 자기가 하는 일에 갈피를 못 잡고 흔들리는 사람입니다.

***God is Good! (All The time!) -*** *(If people don’t pick up, teach them that this was my HS thing)*

Last week, I started to share little about reflecting on how God has been good to you. This would keep us from falling into depression and

Faith, what is faith? This is like the question of truth — what is truth?

These verses revealed to me that following Jesus is not just about having faith. Because in the past, we believed it was “truth” that the Sun and other stars revolved around earth, but now that we have contradicting evidence, it is no longer truth, and we now believe that the earth rotates around the sun. This is an example of how we change truths.

Likewise, faith is something that wavers. It’s not as steady as we desire it to be. One day, I’m gung-ho for God and am willing to do everything for Him. On another day, I may not “be in the mood,” and may want to blatantly sin and just go after my own pursuits.

Faith is not the end goal that God desires, it’s actually the endurance of faith. As we mature in Christ, it seems we waver less and become more confident in trusting in God. Yet, even the most veteran lovers of God are able to have doubts, become confused, and lost.

What this means is that God knows our frailties and our fickle minds (which we particularly blame on circumstances), but God is constant. Our life’s journey is to aim after that constancy of faith, regardless of our circumstances.

In practical sense, God reveals to each of us where we ought to go. If we are confident that one path is where he wants us to go, then, let us hold on to that faith and not change that mindset even as we face trials and seeming roadblocks along the way.

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Here’s the breakdown of Scriptures:

v. 2 – Trials, temptations, suffering, brokenness, hurts, roadblocks — they are good things. Why? Because they test our faith and makes us stronger. It questions what we really believe. If we waiver, then we never had faith in that belief in the first place; if we hold on (even despite the circumstances), that means we believe and have greater confidence in God than the circumstances around us.

This is particularly important to the individual visions God has given us. If, let’s say, God said you would be part of the thousands that will bring revival to your region, but you find yourself abandoned from ministerial positions, would you believe that God never meant that vision for you? The question is really about your faith — do you believe that God speaks to you, and if He did, would he take it back?

v.3,4 – Here is where it talks about endurance being the end goal — not faith. Faith has to grow so that it will endure. Only when endurance (perseverance) is developed, will we be perfect (in our trust and confidence in God) — then we will need nothing. God desires us to be constant, as he is constant (BTW, note that our younger generations tend to be more fickle than the older generations (“I do things because I feel like it“, “I fell out of love, I fell in love“). I think my generation is right in the middle of being fickle and constant (because I think, myself included, we sometimes are very fickle, but are steady on some courses). The older generation is a bit more stubborn and set on their ways (they are like military-trained people when it comes to tough things like coming to church at 5:30am every morning!) This is my personal comparison of older and younger people).

v. 5 If there’s one thing that we do not have, it is wisdom. Fortunately, the promise here is that when we ask, it IS given to us. God will not get upset or cause us harm for not knowing what to do. In practical sense, this is about putting our trust in God in all we do.

In some sense, if someone were to ask me how to know if God is speaking to us, I think this is the easiest to explain. First, we get an impression, a thought or some way to cause us to think — maybe this what God wants me to do or go after. Then we pray seeking wisdom (a short prayer is fine). Then in faith, we go forward and believe this is what God wants us to do and do it.

More practically, as an example, if you ever felt that God wanted you to pray for someone, we ought to ask in prayer, and if there’s no push-back in our hearts, we should go do it. (But often, many of us are afraid and just conclude, “well, let me pray about it some more” — then your chance to take action on your faith passes) — this is not the boldness of a person of faith.

Some situations are more complex and may require longer time in prayer. And this is justifiable –just humble yourself before the Lord and wait on Him to give you full assurance. However, don’t skimp out on small acts that you can do in faith during the time of humbling. (And remember — this is a joyful thing that your faith is being tested!!!).

v. 6 – Again, this verse points of acts of constancy. After having prayed — we must move in faith believing that God has willed what you are about to do and carry on. If we are uncertain, then we should go back to our knees and humble ourselves before Him — but for the most part, many of us have made XYZ commitments to the Lord (which means we’ve already gone through the humbling!), but go back to where we started! (like the Israelites wanting to go back to Egypt, the land of slavery!).

Most practical application here is when we feel God has given us a vision for our lives. As we go along trying our best to fulfill that vision, it may seem as if it is not working out. These are times to say, “this is of God and I’m going to go forward with full confidence in God.” (Instead of going back on your knees and asking, “God are you sure?”). The reason why we shouldn’t is shown in verse 7-8, we are divided — especially blaming it on circumstances. When our hearts and faith is divided like that, you’ll be missing out on the blessings of faith.

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So the goal is believe (have faith) and keep on building on that faith for what God has for us — and enduring in our confidence in God.

Abraham is known as the father of faith, one commended by God. This was not because he believed in God at some points of his life. He believed that God will fulfill everything He has promised throughout his life (and beyond). He was planning to kill his own son because he believed God would do something (such as resurrect his killed-son from the dead) to fulfill the vision of having descendants as many as the sand in the seashores. You see, he ultimately believed in God’s power regardless of the circumstances. (and just for completeness, I should add that he didn’t have a child until he was 100 years old — where his wife was far beyond the age of bearing children. If Abraham didn’t have the constancy of faith, perhaps he would’ve given up when he was age 50, 60, 70 — but he didn’t. He actually endured in his faith even until Isaac has fully grown up, even to kill his son, the only one way that his vision can be fulfilled).

So, brothers and sisters, let us keep going in our faith and believe in all that God has promised us. Let us remain strong in the Lord. Let us aim for that constancy

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Who knows where we will end up? (give examples or ask to think back to several years ago – did we know we’d be where we are today?)