



Rise and Grind to Shine: The Faith Series

Lesson 1: What is Faith and Why is it Important?

Text: Hebrews 12: 1-3, 6: 1 *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”*

God tells us numerous times in the Bible to fear not. However, He continually admonishes His disciples to have faith. Therefore, it can be surmised that the opposite of faith is fear and that the two cannot co-exist; the presence of one negates the presence of the other. Faith simply put is absolute trust in God and His Word. And this trust supersedes our circumstances, our current experience, or other people’s opinions. Faith is the very foundation that our Christian walk is built on. Pay special attention to verse 6 which states, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” We can do and say all of the right things but without faith, it does not amount to much. Why? Because faith in God is a reflection of our perspective on His Word and His very persona. Think for one moment. When you apply for a job, get hired, and start working, do you ever question if you will receive a paycheck every week? No!! You have complete faith that you will receive a check in the pre-determined amount and deposited in your bank account as compensation for your work. You don’t know the person in accounting or the person that signs your check, but you never waver in your faith that you will be paid. In fact, you may plan your budget or future purchases on money that you have not yet received. So, if we can do this for a flawed human being that we have never met, why do we have such a hard time trusting God, the Creator of the entire universe?

When we waver in faith, what we really communicate to God, is that we do not believe that His Word is true, and that it does not take precedence in our lives. Even our earthly relationships are built on trust and when that trust is broken, the relationship suffers. Therefore, how much more should we trust our heavenly Father? Remember what we discussed about Genesis in the purpose series, that before God created the heavens and the earth, it was without form and in complete darkness. However, when God said, "Let there be light", it was so. Our entire existence and the material world around us is the manifestation of God's infallible Word spoken into the atmosphere. And remember, we were made in His image, so the same ability to speak things into existence is in our DNA. In fact Jesus admonishes us in His Word to speak faith for the miraculous to occur in our lives evidenced in Mark 11:22-24 when He says, *"Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. 24 Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you."* Faith is evidenced by the words that we speak as they reveal our heart and how much we trust God with our lives.

So, what exactly is faith then? The definition of faith can be defined by our text with special attention to verses 1-3 *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible."* Faith is the basis of our reality. What we see is not always our reality but a distorted view of temporary circumstances. The Bible tells us that Satan is the god of this world and he is the Father of lies. Therefore, when we often times look at our lives or that of others, we see a snapshot and not the true essence of our existence. Case in point, throughout the Bible God continually called a person something that appears to be completely contrary to who or what they were. He called David a king and he was anointed to be king as a teenager when in actuality he was a shepherd boy which his family was so quick to point out as a means to disqualify him. Joel 3:10 says, *"Let the weak say, 'I am a mighty man.'" If the weak person were to look at his/her lot in life, they would say that I am not strong, I am in actuality weak. However, that person would be incorrect because they are looking at a snapshot of their reality. Faith gives us insight to the mind of God, which is often times contrary to our own beliefs or the existence around us. The Bible tells us that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are higher than our ways. We serve an all-knowing, all powerful God. Remember, back in Genesis in the creation story, the Bible says that the earth was without form and darkness covered the earth. However, God did not see the chaos, nor did He see darkness. He saw the entire world already in full existence. Consequently, he spoke those things that he already saw, and immediately those very words that he spoke were manifested.*

I love the New Living Translation of Hebrews Ch. 11:1, which perfectly sums up the very essence of faith: *"It is the confidence that the things we hope for will actually happen."* We first receive in the spiritual realm and then we later see the actual manifestation in the earthly realm. Remember from our purpose series, when God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to the nations. In Jeremiah 1:5 God tells Jeremiah, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."* At the time Jeremiah was young, but God already called Him a prophet because that was the very reason that he created him, it did not matter what role he was actually fulfilling at that time. Remember Abraham and Sarah that were unable to have children. In Genesis Ch. 15, God tells Abraham not to fear and that his reward will be great. He then goes on to tell Abraham that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. Later in Ch. 17, God addresses Him and

calls Him a father of many nations although at the time, he and his wife Sarah were still childless. Although, it took several years to see the physical manifestation, God had already spoken it into existence and because the Bible tells us that Abraham did not waver in faith but rather believed God's Word, he ultimately obtained the promise and had a son named Isaac.

Now that we know what faith is, why is it so important in the life of a believer? Because faith is the currency of heaven. Just like here on earth, we cannot purchase goods, or obtain necessities for living without an exchange of money, without faith we cannot receive from God. James 1:5-8 makes this abundantly clear which says, 5 *"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."* When we allow doubt and fear to dominate our lives, we block our ability to receive and therefore live a life of lack, far beneath what God intended for us. In addition, we are unable to please God. We do not please God by a life full of works but one of faith. Look again at our text and verse 6 which states, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." Hebrews 10:38 echoes this sentiment and states, *"But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."* So as Christians, our only duty is to walk like Jesus walked which entails a life of faith. It may not be easy, but it is simple and definitely worth it!

Questions to consider:

- 1) Do I have lack in my life? Am I living a life far beneath what God intended and what I have dreamed about? If so, can this be due to my lack of faith?
- 2) What three impossible things can I begin to believe God for this week?
- 3) Is my life an example of one dominated by fear or faith?

Prayer for this week:

Father, I thank you so much for Your Word that is perfect and true. I command that I believe everything written in Your Word concerning me as well as those things that You have placed in my heart. I believe that I will receive prosperity, fulfilled purpose, and healing because Your Word says that those things belong to me as a believer. I repent of any fear in my life and vow to live with the faith and boldness that you desire for me to walk in all the days of my life.

In Jesus' might name I pray,
Amen (It is so)



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Lesson 2: How to Activate Faith in our Lives

Text: Romans 12:2-3 *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”*

Matthew 17:20 *“And He said to them, ‘Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.’”*

So now that we know what faith is and how crucial it is to our lives as believers, how do we utilize it? It is a common misconception that some people have been blessed with lots of faith, while the rest of us go without and struggle to muster up belief in God’s Word. Others believe that great faith is reserved to the amazing pastors and preachers that we see on TV and in our churches every week. However, this is completely contrary to God’s Word. He states in our text that EVERYONE, is given a measure of faith. The word measure means a particular size or amount based upon a pre-determined standard unit. For example, all of us working in the United States obtain money in our currency, the U.S. dollar. Although we are each paid in different sums based upon or various occupations, education levels, and skill sets, the amount of money that we obtain can be used for the same thing; the buying and exchanging of goods. And although it is unclear in our text how or in what amounts this measure of faith

is distributed, we know that our God is a just God, and does not discriminate. Deuteronomy 32:4 states ...” *His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.*” This sentiment is further echoed in Romans 2:11 that clearly states, “For there is no partiality with God.” Therefore, we can see that God does not give as the world does; with some receiving preferential treatment because of status or background. He gives generously to us all. And even if the amount of faith given to us all is not the same, none of us are at a disadvantage. This is evident as Jesus explains in our second text Matthew 17:20, that even if our faith is as small as a mustard seed, when utilized, nothing will be impossible to us.

Therefore, we can surmise that when we constantly experience doubt, fear, and lack in our lives but others experience the abundant life and fulfilled promises of God, it is not because they were given more faith than us. Closely related to our text in Matthew is Luke 17:5. Here the disciples explicitly ask Jesus to increase their faith. And while we should and it is necessary for us to progress and move from faith to faith as the Bible instructs us, Jesus is not as concerned about them increasing their faith as He is in them utilizing the faith that they already possess. This is evidenced as he responds to their request, “*And the Lord said, ‘If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, Be uprooted and be planted in the sea, and it would obey you.’*” This is direct evidence that no matter, what our level of faith is, if we use whatever amount that we have, we can still do the impossible. Remember from our purpose series the Matthew principle found in the parable of the talents. In the parable, a man gave his servants varying amounts of money and after an extended period of time, returned and required each to give an account for what they did with his investment. The first two were given different amounts but each obtained a 100% increase in what was given to him. However, the third did nothing with the money that was given to him and was harshly judged by the master who demanded that his money be taken from him and given to the one with the most. Jesus then stated that to everyone who has nothing, even what he does have will be taken away. And why? Because Jesus gives so generously and freely to us all that if we are found wanting, it is because we have failed to use that which has already been given. Thus, in order to walk by faith, Jesus is not demanding us to do something that he has not first given us the ability to do. He already provided, we just need to walk in it and take the next step. As the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:7, “*We walk by faith and not by sight.*”

So now that we know we each have a measure of faith, how do we activate the faith given to us? In order to activate faith in our lives, Jesus admonishes us to live separately from the world and be transformed by the renewing of our minds in our text found in Romans 12:2-3. Why must our minds be renewed? The Bible tells us that we were born into sin. And as we discussed last week in Lesson 1, satan is the god of this world and the father of lies. Since we are born into this sinful world, we become shaped by its distortions and false reality. However, by faith, we are able to tap into the mind of God and realize our true reality, identity, and existence based upon His truth and not the distorted view that satan presents to us. As we activate faith and begin to utilize it in our lives, we switch from doubt and fear. We are then transformed, and begin to live a life where we no longer walk by what we see which limits us to only what is tangible, but to a life without limits where we have access to the unseen. This process of transformation and activation of faith is accomplished through the Word of God. Romans 10:17 states, “*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*” Therefore, the Word of God should be of utmost importance in our lives. After all, how can we stand on the promises of God spoken to us in His Word, if we never read it to know what those promises are?

Faith is also activated by our confession. Hebrews 10:23 strongly urges us to, *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”* The key to walking in faith is to continually speak faith. If we speak negativity and doubt, we experience it in our life and circumstances. If we speak faith, we obtain the impossible because what we truly believe ultimately comes out of our mouth. And as we discussed last week, faith is simply us believing that what we are hoping for will actually happen. (Hebrews 11:1) The evidence of the impact that our words have on faith can be found in Romans 10:10 which states, *“for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”* Consequently, we first hear the Word of God, we then believe it in our heart, which in turn causes us to confess that which we believe. When we follow this natural progression, we then begin to walk in faith.

In summary in order to activate faith in our lives we must first, hear/read God’s Word. Second, we must allow the Word to transform our minds, fully believing that what God has said is true. And finally, we must continually speak this truth as it is a reflection of our complete trust in God and His ability to perform His Word.

Questions to consider:

- 1) In the past, have I ever thought that everyone else had great faith, but mine was too little to really believe God for anything significant? Now that I know the truth, what will I begin to believe God for?
- 2) Do I truly set aside quiet time regularly to spend time with God and read His Word? If not, how can I incorporate time in my day to do so? What things can I give up to make sure God’s word is the most important part of my day?
- 3) Do the words that I regularly speak express faith or doubt?

Prayer for this week:

Father, we bless your name and thank You so much for Your faithfulness even when we are not faithful. Thank you so much for giving each of us a measure of faith. Please help me to activate that faith today and for the rest of my life so that I may forever walk by faith and the light of Your truth instead of the lies of the world. Open my spiritual eyes to see the unseen, and I thank you with all of my heart for taking away all the limitations of my current circumstances and the things that are seen. I repent for any time that I have neglected the hearing and reading of Your Word and every idle word I have ever spoken in ignorance and doubt. Please forgive me and I renounce anything that I have ever spoken that was not in faith. I declare today and for all of my remaining days, Your Word will be the most important thing in my life and I vow to speak only words of faith.

In Jesus’ might name I pray, Amen (It is so)



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Lesson 3: The Power of Confession: You Shall Have Whatsoever You Say Part I

Text: Mark 11:22-23 *22 "And Jesus answered saying to them, 'Have faith in God. 23 Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him."*

Proverbs 18:21 *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."*

Last week we talked about 3 ways to activate faith in our lives, and one way that we discussed included speaking faith. We learned that confession is an important component of faith as it reveals the true belief of our hearts. Remember the passage of scripture found in Proverbs 23:7, "For as he thinks within himself, so he is." Today we will expound on this and discuss the principle of confession.

In our text found in the book of Mark, is a familiar passage of scripture that we have discussed in the past. Prior to introducing this principle of confession, in verse 23, Jesus was walking with his disciples and after a long day of traveling and performing ministry, He became hungry. He saw a fig tree from a distance and walked toward it to obtain food. However, when he reached the tree, he found nothing but leaves and no fruit on it. He then curses the tree and speaks to it saying that no one will ever eat from it again. The next day, the disciples and Jesus walk past the same tree that is now completely withered from the roots up. Peter points out the demise of the tree to Jesus and then Jesus' answer is found in our text, Mark 11:22-23. First, he tells them to have faith in God. Next he starts His discussion by saying truly. This is an indication that He is about to impart an important principle. This particular principle is so important that he first demonstrated it in the natural with the end result being

the disciples witnessing firsthand the demise of the tree. And now He is about to impart the spiritual component. (As the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:46, *“However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.”*) He tells them to have faith because our level or degree of confession is a direct reflection of what we believe. He then tells them that they can speak the impossible in their lives (i.e. asking a mountain to move) without any doubt and whatever they say will happen. Remember back in Genesis that God created everything with His words spoken into the atmosphere. And Jesus, being the son of God was God made manifest in the earth. Therefore, all of the attributes and character traits of God were reflected in Jesus. We also know that we were made in His image, so the ability to speak things into existence already lies within us. And Jesus showed His disciples the cursing of the fig tree to uncover a profound truth that is the very essence of our being: that our words have tremendous power and in them lies the ability to create. The question remains however, if we will use that power for good or evil, as our text in Proverbs 18:21 shows that we experience death or life depending on how we choose to speak.

James chapter 3 further explores this concept of the power of the tongue and the law of confession and starts in verse 2 which states, *“For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”* He indicates that the tongue controls our entire being; what we say is a direct result of how we behave and the type of life that we live. We first have a belief system based on our own personal experiences and/or the Word of God (depending on if His Word takes precedence in our life.) That belief system in turn drives our thoughts. We then begin to speak the things that we think. Furthermore, we are with ourselves all the time and our thoughts are ever present with us. We constantly ruminate on particular thoughts. If our thought pattern is geared toward the negative, our speech will be a direct reflection of that. Therefore as we discussed last week, it is of utmost importance that we be transformed by the Word of God so that His thoughts become our thoughts and we begin to believe and then speak the Word of God which is true instead of the lies presented by the devil. James continues his discussion on the tongue and advises that if not controlled, it can completely wreck our lives indicated in verse 6, *“And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.”* Here we see that an untamed tongue due to an uncontrolled thought life and untransformed mind, leads to a life destroyed by our negative confession and self-talk. Therefore, in order to turn our lives around, we must first allow the Word of God to take complete precedence in our lives and transform our thought patterns. As we begin to meditate on the Word of God, we begin to speak it; and as this becomes habitual in our lives, we start to experience the miraculous in our lives.

This takes practice but is worth the effort. In order to improve your self-talk there are 3 things that you can do to start:

1. Increase the level of your Word: I sincerely urge you to get in your Word and see what God really thinks about you and the promises that He has given to every believer. As we discussed in the last lesson, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And once faith increases, your positive confession will too.
2. Write down all the things that you are believing God for and repeat them out loud daily, several times a day. I do this and have found it extremely helpful.

3. Avoid negativity. I personally stay away from people that exhibit little faith and live only to grumble and complain. Toxicity is not your friend. Stay close to those who walk in faith and speak it as well.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Will I allow the words that I speak to ruin my life or transform it?
- 2) What 10 things will I start believing God for and confess daily regardless of my circumstances?
- 3) What areas of my life can I cut out to avoid toxic thoughts and words?

Prayer for this week:

Father, I thank you so much for your Word that is transformative and life-giving. Please help me to spend time in your Word daily and as I do, allow it to transform my life and renew my mind. Help me to think the way that you think and see my circumstances how you see them. Let no idle or negative words leave my mouth ever again. I promise to confess your promises daily and confess Your Word only, never doubt or fear. And I thank you in advance for the manifestation of the miraculous in my life.

In Jesus' might name I pray, Amen (It is so)



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Lesson 4: The Power of Confession: You Shall Have Whatsoever You Say (Part II)

Text: Numbers 14:2-3, 11,21-24 2 “All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” ¹¹ The Lord said to Moses, “How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? ²¹ but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord. ²² Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, ²³ shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it. ²⁴ But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.”

Last week we discussed the power of confession and today we will continue part two. We learned in part one that our words have tremendous power and in them lies death and life; the difference between doubt and unfilled purpose and faith and full manifestation of what we are believing God for. Today’s discussion will focus on two individuals named Joshua and Caleb who exemplified this principle, and our role models to how we should speak and think as believers. Our text today can be found in Numbers chapter 14, but before we read it, let’s do a little background. Joshua ultimately became the successor of Moses and was a mighty man of God, as was Caleb. The start of their journey of faith can be found in Numbers chapter 13. I strongly urge you to read this chapter. However, the background of their story is that the children of Israel were enslaved for hundreds of years. However,

God worked through Moses and brought them out of slavery in a miraculous way after 10 horrible plagues on Egypt and the ultimate demise of Pharaoh who enslaved and oppressed them. However, prior to their deliverance, the Lord spoke to Moses and promised to bring them out into an amazing place of blessing specifically designed just for them. God says in Exodus 3:7-8 concerning His promise," *I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. 8 So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.*" The Israelites were well aware of this promise and their distinction as precious children of God. Throughout their journey out of Egypt to the promised land, they are given His Word through the 10 commandments and witness so many miracles in their lives including heavenly provision of food every day, water from a rock, and divine healings.

As they prepare to take possession of the land promised to them, Moses sends 12 spies including Joshua and Caleb into the land to survey it and the inhabitants. After 40 days, they return and give a report to Moses and the entire nation of Israel starting in verse 27 of Numbers 13 which states, *"Thus they told him, and said, 'We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; 32 The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. 33 There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."* This is the key here, as the Bible says in Proverbs 23:7, *"For as he thinks within himself, so he is."* Consequently, if our mind is not renewed, we are not transformed, and our belief system is incorrect. This leads to speech that is negative and full of doubt and fear and ultimately becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Pay special attention to verse 28 when they say the word nevertheless, which is preceded by them speaking about how indeed the land is as God promised, flowing with milk and honey. With this one word, they completely negated the promise just spoken before and forfeited their blessing. And what is crazy here is that He promised that the land would be amazing, and they witnessed it firsthand but refused to believe the second part of the blessing that it would be theirs. If God was faithful to perform one thing by making sure that the land was good, why wouldn't he be able to perform the rest by giving it into their hands?! God Himself became so fed up with the unbelief and negative talk that he swore that their words would come true and that they would die in the wilderness and never see the promise. And guess what? This is exactly what happened! And now we will pick up our text for today, Numbers 14:2-3, 11, 21-24. After the 10 spies have given their report of unbelief while Joshua and Caleb speak faith, the people choose to believe the report of doubt and start to grumble and complain against God. In addition, to add insult to injury, they begin to wish that they were back in slavery in Egypt! This is evidence of a mind that is not renewed. They would rather be second class citizens than be the king and queens that God made them to be and own territory instead of being subjected to oppression.

Ultimately, we see that God lost patience with the children of Israel, and allowed them to eat the fruit of their words; they did indeed die in the wilderness. However, Joshua and Caleb through their faith and confession, were the only 2 out of millions of people including Moses that obtained the promise of God. It is the saddest thing in the world to be so close to a breakthrough, but never possess it

because of our unbelief. Often times we balk at the audacity, immaturity, and lack of faith that the Israelites possessed. However, I can honestly say that for a large portion of my life as a believer, I acted the same way. I constantly worried despite all of the wonderful blessings that I experienced in my life. Just like the children of Israel, I would believe God for some but not all. I believed in salvation and divine healing, but I didn't believe Him for help with my finances. Or sometimes we believe God for finances, but we don't believe that He can restore our broken heart or relationships. As the prophet Elijah inquired in I Kings 18:21, "*How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him....*" If we are going to believe God for the impossible in our lives, we need to believe Him for all of it, not just half or not at all. Be a Joshua and Caleb in this unbelieving generation. Because of their confession of faith, they were granted access to enter the promised land. We shall have whatsoever we say, so make sure that every word spoke out of your mouth is full of faith and perfectly aligned with God's Word and what He says concerning You, not what others think or say.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Does my life look like that of the children of Israel or Joshua and Caleb?
- 2) What blessings has my negative outlook and mouth kept me from?
- 3) When I am under pressure, do I continue to speak faith despite adversity, or do I let doubt and fear control and dominate?

Prayer for the week:

Father, I thank You for Your Sovereignty. You know and see all things. Thank you for preparing amazing blessings for me. I ask that You please help me to watch the words that I speak and only speak Your Word, not my own. Please keep me from negativity and doubt. Enable me to walk like Joshua and Caleb; by faith and not by sight, unable to be moved by this godless and unbelieving generation. Create in me a clean new heart and a renewed mind that is transformed by Your Word. I believe You for everything and anything in my life and thank You in advance for all that You are going to do in my life.

In Your precious name I pray,

Amen (It is so)



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Lesson 5: Think on These Things

Text: Philippians 4:8 *“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”*

II Corinthians 10:5 *“We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”*

Last week we finished Part II of our discussion on the power of confession. We looked into the lives of Joshua and Caleb and saw how the words that they spoke brought them into the promised land. They were two out of millions that rejected fear, doubt, and negative speech and obtained the promise of God spoken over their lives in full when everyone else came up empty-handed. Therefore, since we now know how powerful our words are, we must ensure that we speak life every single time that we open our mouths because our words inevitably dictate our outcome and position in life. This is evidenced in Matthew 12:36-37 which states, *“36 But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”* Therefore, we must always be cognizant of the words that we speak and choose them carefully.

To be able to continually speak faith and life, we must first have thoughts that reflect these very things. As we discussed in a previous lesson, God admonishes us through scripture to

renew our minds, and be transformed by His Word. When we are thus transformed, we gain insight into the mind of God and His special plans, promises, and purpose for our life. As we gain and begin to build upon this knowledge and wisdom, we reflexively believe in our heart and ultimately speak those very things which we now believe. This process is evidenced by Matthew 12:34 which states, *“For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.”* Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for us to make sure that our thoughts line up with the Word of God.

Now we come to our text for today found in Philippians 4:8. But before we read, we will discuss a bit of background. Prior to this verse, Paul commands us not to be anxious. Instead of succumbing to anxiety and fear, we are to take all of our concerns to God in prayer. As we submit our requests to Him, we should give thanks. Here Paul is encouraging us to have faith and believe in God’s Word. Remember our scripture text from the first lesson Hebrews 11:1 which states, *“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen.”* Therefore, Paul is advising us to continue this principle by refusing to doubt and fear but to ask God in faith, fully believing that we will receive what we have asked for and even going so far as to thank God in advance. Now we will look at our text. Paul tells us to fix our thoughts on things that are true, right and pure. These are attributes of God and His Word. God is holy, pure, and the very essence of love and truth. Remember that satan is the god of this world and the father of lies. Consequently, he constantly perpetuates his lies through imagery, words, and our current culture that inundates our thoughts and floods our eye gates. Therefore, when we dwell on the things that we see and hear, we believe his lies. However, when we dwell on the Word of God and fix our eyes on what is unseen rather than seen, (II Corinthians 4:18) we have access to the truth, which elicits faith, and ultimately gives rise to freedom. As John 8:32 says, *“and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”*

As we saw last week, Joshua and Caleb had tremendous faith in the face of adversity and refused to let anything contrary to their belief leave their lips. However, Joshua 1:8 gives us insight to how Joshua’s speech was unwavering as God commands him before taking possession of the land, *“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”* Joshua was able to continually speak faith because his mind was trained to meditate on the Word of God not what he saw or the opinions of others. Because he meditated on the Word of God, he was not conformed to the world of Egypt and the life of slavery that he was born into as the other Israelites were. While they still saw themselves as slaves, he saw himself as God did, a special chosen people designed to rule and reign with dominion and might. He rejected the lies of the devil and embraced the truth about himself revealed by the Word of God. He then believed in his heart, and eventually his words flowed out of his deep beliefs. Joshua became so adept at this process of transformation, belief, and confession that in Joshua 10, he refuses to give up on a promise given to him by God in the face of adverse circumstances and prays a crazy ridiculous prayer that ultimately defies physics and stops the sun! We will take a deeper look into this

story next week but suffice it to say that Joshua is the ultimate example of the powerful effects of a positive God-centered thought life.

However, in our quest of developing a thought life pleasing to God, we must not think that once we dedicate our thoughts to reflecting the Word of God, that we will never experience any negative thoughts. This is unrealistic and untrue. We still live in a sinful world and are flawed human beings. Nevertheless, our other scripture verse in our text today, teaches us how to combat sin and defeat in our mind as we look at II Corinthians 10:5. Here we learn that instead of accepting negative thoughts, we are to first compare it to Christ and His Word. If the thoughts do not line up, we are to swiftly reject them. For instance, we may be going through a tough time and feel overwhelmed. A thought may then come to us saying, "You are not enough for this, this is impossible, you cannot do this." Instead of accepting this thought and receiving it as truth and ultimately repeating it out loud, we look at God's Word that says in Philippians 4:13, "*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*" We see that this thought is contrary to the Word of God, therefore we reject it and accept the truth that we are strengthened by Christ and can do whatever He has called us to do. As we begin to reflect on this truth rather than the lie, we ultimately believe that God is always greater than any circumstance. We then speak that out of our mouth, and eventually faith causes us to overcome! Therefore, be careful of the thoughts that you pay attention to because your belief and ultimately your words will soon follow.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Are my thoughts mostly positive or negative?
- 2) Do my thoughts reflect the Word of God or the lies of the devil?
- 3) When I am under pressure, do I continue to speak faith despite adversity, or do I let doubt and fear control and dominate?

Prayer for the week:

Father, I thank You so much for Your Word. Please let Your Word renew my mind and transform me so that my thoughts become your thoughts. Please help my thoughts to line up with Your Word and what You say about me. In turn, may my heart and every word that I speak from now on reflect faith. I ask you to increase my faith. And when negative thoughts and doubt come to my mind, help me to compare them to Your Word and when they do not line up, help me to immediately reject them. Give me wisdom, strength, and knowledge. Thank you for changing the way that I think and ultimately changing my life for Your good will and pleasure.

In Jesus' mighty name I pray,
Amen (It is so)