

2133 - FAITH PRODUCING STEADFASTNESS - Jam 1:2-4

PRELIMS. I want to look at faith *that produces STEADFASTNESS* or **endurance!** Not simply 'faith' but faith that produces steadfastness' = Faith in **Jesus Christ!** Faith that is not steadfast is not true faith! It is not gospel faith. True faith does not give up! It holds on to its **object** (Jesus X) **despite set-backs, perplexities, confusions, unsolved mysteries!** Faith may **wax** and **wane**, and have **highs** and **lows** but it does not give- up! There may be **fears** but no quitting!

Note: It is actually **not** 'faith that produces steadfastness', but the **testing** of this faith which produces **steadfastness**. Some people's faith (even in Christ) is **stagnant!** If we **endure** testing, this faith **produces** other characteristics. Paul tells us elsewhere that this 'steadfastness' produces **character**, which produces **hope!** This faith, after **everything** that life throws at it, is **resolute, single-minded - immovable!** Faith in Jesus Christ **drives** you on despite the difficulties of life. After all the **trauma**, you still have faith in X!

This faith is **not blind, stupid** faith! I have read of someone saying, 'To prove that my faith is so strong that I am going to throw myself over this cliff'! It is **not** 'faith in faith' but 'faith **in Christ!** The Christ who **saved** people **by His death!** People can be very **gullible**, and just have faith that things will turn out fine in the end! No, no!

The faith of X may still **leave** you **WITH** the pain of your **suffering!** Paul *My grace is sufficient for you for My power is made perfect in weakness!* Even Jesus *was made perfect through suffering* [Heb 2:8] and He *learned from the things which He suffered!* [Heb 5:8] The faith of X is **vastly different** from the faith that **guarantees** healing or success! Rather, it **glories** in the **will** of **God** being done! Yes, of course, God **can** and **does** heal in wonderful ways - but that is **not** the **norm!** *It seems from Scripture to be of **more glory** to God to have us **believe/trust/love/praise** Him in the **midst** of **suffering**, than for us to praise God in **prosperity!** Paul's thorn was **given** to him so that **God's power** in him would be seen! *My power is made perfect in weakness* [2C12:7] *The sickness and death of Lazarus was for the **glory** of **God**, *so that the Son of God may be glorified through it* [J11:4] Fact is, **faith** through suffering is God glorifying!

*You might ask ‘Then, **why pray** for healing?’ The answer is that God **also appointed/ordained** that **prayer** be the **means by which** many healings, will take place. God **planned/ordained** ‘This and that person is going to be healed **through prayer**’. But not everyone who is ill and prayed for, will be healed - but **some will**. So pray!

*Some people give up faith because their friend/family have not been healed. ‘God could easily heal. Why did He not? He has the power!’ Because God has **ALREADY ORDAINED** that **all** of us **will** grow **old**, that we **will** get **sick**, that we **will** die. That’s **fixed** - that **cannot be reversed!** All **providences/circumstances** are **oriented** with that **in place**. Its our **destiny!** Our orientation is towards old age, death!

*Some people ask: Why does God **permit/allow** so many sicknesses/tragedies to occur? Ans: Because of man’s **sin!** Sickness/death/evil is the **result/fruit** of sin. ‘So why does God **permit sin?**’ Because He **gave** mankind **FREE-WILL** (to ‘seal’ their own future) - and that **cannot be reversed!** Its **sealed!** God does not **change His mind!** [17c]! That is why God is reliable - He **keeps His promises!**

*Some people ask: **Why** does God not just **convert** everybody? Because that would ‘interfere’ with our free-will, ie, He would be treating us like **objects** and **robots** without our wills functioning!

Therefore God calls upon us to **pray about all our problems!** In some the prayers will be answered, in some they will **not** be answered. *In the case of those whose prayers will not be answered it will be a **means for their faith to grow steadfast** - because **that too** has been ordained! You see, the **means** God very often uses for faith to **produce** steadfastness is testing by **disappointment/suffering!** Paul told the Romans to **rejoice** in their sufferings **KNOWING that suffering produces endurance** ‘hupomony’[Rom5:3].

Difficulties are **not** really **against** those who have **faith** in Jesus X, rather they are **for** them! *we know that for those who love God all things work together for good* [Rom 8:28]! Really you should be **glad** when you have difficulties! *Count it all joy my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds!!* Note: there may be **various** kinds of trial for us! Health, family, employment! Life for us may be like a **jigsaw** with all the pieces spread out on the floor with seemingly

little ‘connection’ between them! But as time goes on and on, as piece by piece fits in somewhere, so we begin to get the overall picture! You are looking for a piece and cannot find it - yet that piece **IS THERE** somewhere! Its the same with life - pieces **fit-in later!**

Faith in X is a **lifestyle!** It is a **way of life!** Its how we live each and every day - **believing** in God. Yes, as we said, there **are highs/low!** But Xns make the **same decisions** during both highs/low - even to their **hurt!** Faith in X means **stability** in the midst of an **unstable world!** When **temptation** comes, when things go wrong, when there is **pressure**, we **remain FAITHFUL**, our **trust** is in the same place - the **promises** of God’s Word. So when things go wrong...

We still **worship**. We **don’t stop** praying. We don’t stop joining God’s people in **fellowship/worship!** We don’t give up church because it is **inconvenient**. We still read our Bibles. We are **single-minded**. A double-minded man [8] is a man who lives as **two** men - when things are fine he believes; when things are not fine, or when **sin** looks **beautiful**, he **doesn’t obey** and walks in his own way. Satan can make sin look **beautiful** and **reasonable** and even **wise!** Satan can appeal to **common sense** - so the man that is double-minded will easily fall prey to his **devices** and his own sinful heart.

Doubt is **distinct** from **unbelief!** Faith and unbelief are **decisions!** Doubt isn’t! Doubt is indecision. **Unbelief** is a decision that there is no God in control. So we live as if God and His law did not exist. **Faith** is believing that God is there, He knows and sees everything going on in my life **and** in my **heart!!** *He that comes to God must believe that He exists!* [Heb 11:6] So faith in X *fears God and keeps His commandments*. To **fear** God is a **good** thing. Do not believe those who say Xns should never fear God. Even in **heaven** they fear God. A voice in heaven:- *Praise our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him, small and great* [Rev 19:5] [Present middle tense!]

Steadfastness, ‘hupomony’ has **growth!** The directive here is *Let steadfastness have its FULL effect!* We are given a command to so behave as to **allow** steadfastness to do what is **natural** to it - become full! We must **not inhibit** its natural course - which is possible!

Have you noticed some Xns **lack** many spiritual gifts and blessings? That might be because their steadfastness is not **developing**. *Let steadfastness have its **full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing*** [4] Like all Xn graces/gifts, steadfastness **needs** to **develop** in order for other graces/gifts to grow. Just as it is natural for a child to grow, so it is natural for a Xn to grow but if we do not take food and nourishment, **neither** of them will grow!

Have you ever wondered how Paul was **so confident** about the Thess's standing in X? *We **know brothers...that He has chosen you!*** Well it was because of **3** things. Their **work of faith** and their **labour of love** and their **steadfastness** 'hupomony' of **hope** [1Thes1:3]

The Thess suffered much persecution - but they did not lose faith. *you received the Word in **much affliction*** [1Th1:6] *you **suffered the same things from your own countrymen*** as the Jews did! [1Th2:14]. The **faith** they had in X, **made** them **work** and serve the Lord. The **love** they had to X, **made** them **struggle** to love those who persecuted them. And all that made them **steadfast in hope**. Hope of course is **expectation!** They expected God to do great things for them. None of the problems they had **diverted** them from **holding on** to Jesus X. When **pressure** came to give up their faith, that only made them hold on **all the more!** They were **made steadfast** through the suffering and struggles they had in Thessalonika.

APP So how are **you** doing? Having a **rough** time? Things not too good just now? Have you set 'faith in X' aside? Do you **realise** that problems/difficulties are a **means** God uses to **test** the faith of His people? Have you given up some aspects of 'the faith'? Do you come to all the **meetings** of the saints, or do **not** think it is **important?**

Can you honestly say that the **difficulties** in **YOUR** life *is producing steadfastness?* Do you **realise** the importance of **holding fast** to X? I have **good news** for you? The Xn Hebs needed endurance! *you have **need of endurance*** [Heb 10:36] so pointed them to X! What **helped** the Thess's to **endure** suffering? **Paul's preaching!** *it was **necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead*** [Acts 17:3]! So **come afresh** to God's Word and to X Himself! Listen to one of His closest followers *from **His fullness we have all received*** [John1:16]