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Grace Energized Men: Healthy Faith vs. Unhealthy Faith



Part 17 (080224AM)

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Please open to Titus 2, where we find the marching orders for all men in Christ's church.

This chapter lays out God's expectations for all men young and old, as well as we already have seen, for all women young and old.

We have come to the fourth quality of grace-energized men that the Spirit of God moves Paul to record in this letter to Titus. Paul tells him that men who are energized by His grace, are characterized by what God calls "soundness in faith". This sound faith or literally as the word **hugaino** means, "healthy faith" is a most precious commodity in a believers life.

Sound [1] is from the same word used in v.1 for Biblical doctrine, and refers to things that are healthy, proper, whole, and as they ought to be. So, grace-energized men have a faith that is healthy, proper, and whole; and a faith that is as God designed it to be.

Faith is Vital to God

God's Word talks much about faith. The word "faith" occurs in our Bible no less than 245 times (in the NKJV translation of God's Word) [2]. The Bible describes faith by many different words.

- There is "weak faith" and "little faith" that should be avoided at all costs because it leads to unhealthy faith that is devastating as we'll see this morning.
- Then there is "healthy faith" (Titus 2:2) that is described in God's Word as "strong" faith, "bold" faith, "rich" faith, "abiding" faith, "steadfast" faith, "precious" faith, "common" faith, "unfeigned" faith, "working" faith, "obedient" faith, and "great faith". Each of these 12 types of faith is commended by God and should be sought after and imitated.
- And finally there is that one last dreadful strain of faith, God's Word often warns us about, called "dead" faith that should be carefully watched out for as we go through our life-long spiritual pilgrimage, waiting for our Savior's coming or calling for us.

Biblical faith is not a feeling of "hoping so" or some blind optimistic attitude; neither is it merely assenting to a list of facts or teachings; neither is it superstition, which is the believing in something despite evidence to the contrary. Rather, faith described in God's Word is:

"True Bible faith is confident obedience to God's Word in spite of circumstances and consequences. Listen to that last sentence again and let it soak into your mind and heart.

This faith operates quite simply. God speaks and we hear His Word. We trust His Word and act on it no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be. The circumstances may be impossible, and the consequences frightening and unknown; but we obey God's Word just the same and believe Him to do what is right and what is best". [3]

We will end this brief study with God's warning about dead faith. But, to begin with our study of healthy faith, open now with me to Ephesians 4. Healthy faith as Paul told Titus that God wants in all men, is contrasted in these verses.

Symptoms of Unhealthy Faith

Paul describes here, in his letter to the church Timothy pastored in Ephesus, what unhealthy

or incomplete faith looks like in v.14. Those who are not grounded in truth, growing a sound or healthy faith get driven and tossed through life.

In everyday life unhealthy faith in the lives of believers causes them to unnecessarily struggle through just about every realm of their lives. The signs of a lack of the healthy or sound faith that Paul told Titus about, can be seen in the unhealthy and unsound faith that he describes to Timothy—fleshed out in the tossed and driven lives of people.

Ephesians 4:11-16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. NKJV

Believers with unhealthy faith are sometimes called “worldly” Christians, because they seem to act so much like unsaved people. Their lives are, as Jesus said, like the pagans ([Matthew 6:32](#)), in that they are people constantly prone to worry, who go from one bad relationship to another, often struggling with growing bitterness, and often experiencing a great lack of patience, or even struggling with endless loneliness, lust, and addictions.

These believers can also show their unhealthy faith in poor marriages, endless problems raising their children, and often their out of control tempers. Each of these are symptoms of unhealthy faith; and each of these life-symptoms are described in God’s Word as problems that are rooted deeply in our hearts.

Many of these symptoms of unhealthy faith can also cause related physical and emotional problems. Sadly, many unhealthy believers merely go to physicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists with these life-crippling problems instead of also going to the place where real and lasting change can come which is to God—the only One who can heal us spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

God’s Recovery Program is Always Sanctification

Always remember that God’s recover program, as described in the Bible is called sanctification. As Jesus said when He prayed to God the Father for you and me in the Garden of Gethsemane, two thousand years ago:

John 17:17 “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. NKJV

The only way to healthy faith; and the only road out of unhealthy faith that manifests itself so often with emotional and physical symptoms—is faith in God, whose recovery program in His Word is called sanctification.

So once again we see that in [Titus 2:2](#), Grace-energized Men are in a life-long sanctification program which leads them to become sound in faith. As a disciple of Christ they are constantly GUARDING A HEALTHY MIND IN A SICK WORLD.

These godly men, by their lives and words declare that God can be trusted in every way. They have learned not to question His wisdom. They hold fast to His goodness. They look and wait for His grace that comes with His divine plan.

“What is true of individual believers is, of course, also true of the church as a body. A church that is grounded in spiritual truth and protected from spiritual falsehood is to be spiritually healthy and productive through the way in which its members live. The fruit of right doctrine is righteous living”.^[4]

All Believers are to be Sound in Healthy Faith

God’s eternal plan is that all believers serve Him with healthy faith, and live as truth beacons in a world of lies. The Reformation went far in teaching about the priesthood of the believers but didn’t sufficiently train them or utilize them in service. This is not a criticism, just an observation from history.

God’s plan for training each believer in their ministry of offering worship in spirit and in truth is laid out in [Ephesians 4:11-14](#).

| Ephesians 4:11-14 | Comments | Future Action |
|---|---|--|
| <i>4:11 And he gave some [to be] apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;</i> | God has a plan to spread His truth and sends those He has gifted to declare and teach His truth. | God calls and gifts believers for each generation; and asks us to seek Him and find His plan that He has for the rest of our life. |
| <i>4:12 for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ:</i> | God’s plan is that every saint be trained in living and sharing the truth with other saints (equipping and edifying)—and discipling others into discipler makers. | Leaders are responsible to monitor whether the church is raising up disciples who equip and edify (the two parts of discipleship), or are we just assembling a group of listeners. |
| <i>4:13 till we all attain</i> | We must keep the focus | People need to see God’s |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: | upon our mission, not the bumps along the way. The goal is “all” equipped to disciple others in the Truth. | plan, and be pointed down a path they can follow to grow in His Truth, and then be reminded that they are to be actively using their gifts in others lives. |
| 4:14 that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error. | Without fellow believers equipping and edifying us, the work doesn’t get done, believers are weakened by sin, and the church stagnates. | We never know everything, but everyone can know enough of the truth to walk in the Spirit and equip and edify someone else. |

[Ephesians 4:11-14](#) then clearly teaches us that the key to keeping believers from being tossed around in life (4:14) is to train them up in a healthy faith (4:11-13) and to expect them to equip and edify others.

Only when believers are on the path of being grounded in healthy or sound faith, and growing from disciples to disciple makers, do they fully become all that God designed them to be.

We must be trained to be trainers in spiritual growth. Sadly, most believers never get beyond the baby stage. But God has asked us to all do our part because...

We Have an Incredible Shared Faith in Christ

True unity in Christ flows from sound or healthy faith. Paul starts chapter 4 with a description of the ultimate unity that is to bind all true believers together.

Of course, Paul doesn’t describe unity in Ephesians until we get to chapter 4. He had to lay three chapters of doctrine down as a reminder that Biblical unity starts with true doctrine. Unity that is built upon anything but true Scriptural doctrine is built upon shifting sands and has no real foundation.

In [Ephesians 4:4-6](#), Paul lays down the seven basic spiritual truths or doctrines of God’s Word that become realities for those who have sound or healthy faith. Why not take a little test with Paul and see how healthy your faith is this morning. All true believers are united around these truths.

1. **Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One body.**

Though there are many local assemblies, many local churches, Paul here declares that there is only ONE body of Christ in which each believer is a member. Each born-from-above-believer is placed into Christ’s body at the instant of conversion by the Spirit of God ([1 Cor. 12:12-31](#)). The model that ever local body is to follow is the model of the one true body which is Christ’s.

However, God makes it clear that being in Christ’s body means that we must seek out and become a part of a local body of believers because it is only within that visible fellowship can we exercise our spiritual gifts as we saw last time in equipping (mending) and edifying (building up), to grow personally and to help others to grow.

2. **Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One Spirit.**

There is only ONE Spirit of God, and that same Holy Spirit comes to indwell every believer also at the instant of salvation. It is God’s Spirit that causes each of us to belong to each other through the Lord.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned over a dozen times in Ephesians, because only by His power energizing God’s grace in our lives, can we live the Christian life.

3. **Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One hope of your calling.**

There is only ONE calling we all have and that is to live in hope of God. He has saved us to not just live a few years or months here on Earth, He saved us to live forever in His Presence as His worshipping-bondservants. The Holy Spirit assures us from the inner reaches of our souls that Christ is coming to take us His Church home to live in the place He is right now preparing us ([Eph. 1:13-14](#)).

Paul asking each of us to stop and realize that there is only one body, and all members of that body have the same Spirit, and all are waiting for the same Savior to take them to the same place that Christ has prepared—and that should draw all of us to be Christ’s peacemakers ([Matthew 5:9](#)) instead of troublemakers.

4. **Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One Lord.**

There is only ONE Lord of Glory who came in human flesh, lived a perfect life, and died the perfect atoning death—and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. With only One Lord who lives within each of us, died for each of us, and is coming to get each us—isn’t it hard to believe that we can be following the same Lord, and yet not be able to walk together in unity? Sadly, when Gandhi (1869-1948), the revered spiritual leader of India was asked what was the “greatest hindrance to Christianity in India?” He replied, “Christians.” [\[5\]](#)

To reach our world for Christ, only a concerted effort among true believers to live out Christ's Lordship, can bring the unity needed to let the world see an undistorted picture of Jesus through us.

5. **Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One faith.**

There is only ONE body of truth, given by God through His Spirit, deposited in the Bible, and now entrusted as a treasure for Christ's Church to guard. Jude called it "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Paul told Timothy and all pastors and elders to come that these were the basic doctrines that they were to teach, guard, and pass on to the next generation of faithful teachers (2 Tim. 2:2).

For 2,000 years some areas of interpretation and church practice have seen differences among true believers; but all true Christians agree on "the faith".

If we could convene into one board meeting eight of the better known believers of the past 15 centuries of church history: the 4th century St. Augustine (354-430 AD) the great doctrinal mind, 11th century Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) who wrote "Jesus the Very Thought of Thee", 16th century Reformers Luther (1483-1546) and Calvin (1509-1564), 18th century evangelists J. Wesley (1703-1791) and Whitfield (1714-1770), 19th century evangelist Moody (1837-1899), and our most well known modern evangelical Christian Billy Graham (1918-present).

There would never be a unanimous vote on ecclesiology, eschatology, pneumatology, or many other branches of theology—but they would always be united in Christ, the One they served, loved, and followed. They would always be united in the same Lord Jesus Christ who loved them, gave Himself for them, and saved each of them!

We could say there are only three key elements of the faith: the doctrines of God in three persons (tri-unity), His Word (inspiration), and salvation through Christ alone (imputation). So true believers should be able to all affirm something close to this:

I believe in the [inspiration of the Bible](#) (both the Old and the New Testaments); the [creation of man](#) by the direct act of God; the [incarnation](#) and [virgin birth](#) of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; His [vicarious atonement](#) for the sins of mankind by the shedding of His blood on the cross; the [resurrection of His body](#) from the tomb; His [power to save](#) men from sin; the [new birth](#) through the regeneration by the Holy Spirit; and the [gift of eternal life](#) by the grace of God.

To depart from the basic doctrines of "the faith" brings confusion, distorts God's Word and causes the real disunity of the body of Christ.

6. **Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One baptism.**

There is only ONE baptism that has always been necessary for salvation and that is this one Paul describes here. God Himself baptizes all believers, at the instant of salvation, with the Holy Spirit, as God places the believing sinner into the Body of Christ at conversion (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The New Testament always presents this baptism of the Spirit as a part of salvation, not a subsequent event that is to be sought. Only the continuous refilling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) is commanded to be sought by all believers.

For the One Body of Christ, God does the baptizing, but for the also commanded local expressions of that body, individual believers are to seek obediently to be baptized in water after their salvation, as an act of obedience to Christ's command to His Church.

7. **Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One God and Father.**

There is only ONE Father that we all share, and that is a particular emphasis Paul taught throughout his ministry to the church at Ephesus (Eph. 1:3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 5:20). Paul continued Christ's emphasis in His earthly ministry that all true believers who are born from above have the same Father in Heaven. Jesus taught us to pray not to "my" Father, but "our" Father. This leads to an amazing unity as we see ourselves a part of the very same family, loving and serving the same Father, and related to all of His other children. So much of our understanding of how we must learn to get along in a biological family helps us to see we must likewise learn as God's grace energizes us to get along in our greater, and larger spiritual family.

Sound faith is always to be accompanied by sound love as Titus 2 says. Doctrinal purity doesn't insure spiritual unity in love as Christ's words to Ephesians in Revelation 2 remind us, that is why Paul told the Ephesians they must only speak truth when it is mixed with love (Ephesians 4:15).

Unity must be doctrinal, but it also must be relationally based in Spirit-prompted love. False doctrine leads to unhealthy faith which will break our unity in the Spirit of God as both Paul (Rom. 16:17–20), and John (2 John 6–11), warn the local churches.

When we have Spirit-prompted, grace-energized soundness of faith, it is that wisdom from above that is first "pure, then peaceable" (James 3:17).

Christ Desires True Unity in His Church

True unity in Christ flows from sound or healthy faith. Paul gives us a description of the ultimate unity that is to bind all true believers together.

Unity that is built upon anything but true Scriptural doctrine is built upon shifting sands and has no real foundation.

In [Ephesians 4:4-6](#), we have the seven basic spiritual truths or doctrines of God's Word that become realities for those who have sound or healthy faith.

How healthy is your faith today?

All true believers who are "sound in the faith" find they are united around these truths.

Next time we are going to look at Healthy Faith vs. Dead or Counterfeit Faith. God has always warned—Beware of dead, counterfeit, or fake faith!

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 7:21-27](#)) Jesus warned that there will be many within Christ's visible church that were convinced that they had genuine faith but do not. One of Satan's methods as described in Christ's parables ([Matthew 13:24-30](#)), is to imitate and fake God's work, and sow a crop of false followers of Jesus. God commands every person who testifies that they belong to Christ, to do a spiritual self-examination and look for the evidence of genuine, healthy faith.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5a).

Vital Signs of Living Faith

There are some key questions that we should ask and answer for ourselves as an obedient response to the clear command of [II Corinthians 13:5](#). Why not prayerfully ponder these questions all alone with the Lord this week [\[6\]](#)?

1. Can you describe a time when you honestly realized you were a sinner and confessed this to yourself and to God?
2. Can you describe a time when your heart stirred you to flee to Christ as the only escape from the wrath to come? Has your heart ever seriously grieved over the gravity of your personal sins that you agree with God that you have committed?
3. Have you truly understood the Gospel of grace? That Christ died in your place, took your sins, and arose from the grave having fully satisfied God's wrath against your sins? Have you understand and confessed that you cannot save yourself?
4. Did you sincerely repent of your sins and turn from them? Or do you secretly love sin and want to enjoy it?
5. Are you presently clinging to Christ and in trusting Him alone, for your salvation? Can you describe a living relationship that you enjoy with Him through His Word and in His Spirit?
6. Can you identify how Christ has changed your life? Are you seeking to daily maintain good works, or are your works occasional and weak? Do you seek to grow in the things of the Lord? Can others tell that you have been with Jesus?
7. Do you desire to share Christ with others? Or are you ashamed of Him?
8. Do you enjoy the fellowship of God's people? Is worship a delight to your heart?
9. Are you seeking each day to be ready for the Lord's return? Or will you be ashamed when He comes for you?

Each believer is uniquely born again into the family of God; but all are saved the same way—by God's grace through faith only in Christ's ability to take their sin upon Himself. Experiences will differ, some words will not be the same, and degrees of sanctification are always present—but the essence will always be there.

However, these 9 questions can truly become a tool to allow each believer to do that spiritual self examination and say with David:

"Search me, O Lord, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

[1] Sound translates a participle form of the verb *hugainō*, which has the basic meaning of "being well and healthy" and is the term from which we derive "hygiene." Paul uses a form of this word nine times in the pastoral epistles, five of those times in Titus, and always in relation to personal righteousness and spiritual well-being. He repeatedly emphasizes that sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1) eventuates in sound faith and sound speaking (1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:13; 2:2, 8). Healthy doctrine produces healthy spiritual living.

[2] And 247x in the KJV; and 250x in the NASB; and 270x in the NIV. Amazingly in my electronic library of over 350 reference books the word faith shows up

[3] Quoted from the Hebrews 11 portion of Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[4] MacArthur, John: *Titus*. Chicago : Moody Press, 1996, S. 90

[5] This quote and some of these ideas are drawn from Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Ephesians 4*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[6] Adapted and drawn from the James 2 portion of the electronic version of Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

