

June 27, 2010
Abounding in Faith

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”
Romans 10:17

Are you a good listener? When someone is talking to you do you give them your full attention? Are you able to repeat what they just said? Will you be able to tell someone the main theme of this message tomorrow? I ask you that; because, if were not careful, we can become listeners who don't hear.

Have you ever been focused on a particular thing when someone is talking to you and you keep nodding your head and saying ah ha, ah ha, but you're not hearing anything they say? At some point the person may ask something like, “so what do you think?” You have a couple of choices at this point. You can try to bluff your way through by responding with, “I'm not sure, can you tell me more about it”, or you can come clean and say, “I'm sorry I was distracted and didn't really hear you, can you tell me again”

Our message today has a lot to do with hearing and not just listening. To hear something means to understand, to get what is being said; it's an, ah ha moment.

The main verse we're looking at today is **Romans 10:17**. Leading up to this verse the Apostle Paul is speaking about hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ and responding in Faith, responding with belief in Gods Son. We have the promise that whoever believes in Him, puts their faith in Jesus Christ, will not be disappointed. This particular verse helps us to see many things about the faith we hold in our Lord, how we receive it and where it comes from.

Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.”

In this verse, hearing means to understand. It means that what you've heard makes sense. In essence it's saying that you have faith, you believe in what's being said to you because it does make sense; you get it. Of course it doesn't make sense to everyone; not everyone who listens to the message of Christ actually hears it, understands it, and believes it. We'll talk more about that in a bit.

First I want to ask you this. What does it mean to abound in faith? Well, to abound means to be abundant, it means being multiplied; sort of like mice or rabbits. There is an exponential effect. There's more and more and more. The definition I like best though, is to overflow, or overflowing. Overflowing has an uncontrollable aspect about it, as when a damn can't contain all the water coming in and it overflows. Water pours over every side and nothing can stop it. That's the kind of abounding I'm talking about. In scripture abounding is used in many ways; as in Acts 16 where we're told the

church was “growing daily.” Romans 3 tells us that the truth of God “abounds”, as does His grace. In Corinthians we are called to “abound” in love. We are being told that we are to let our love overflow.

Ok, I think we get what it means to abound, but what is faith. Well, most of us understand what faith means, but I want to remind you. Faith is to put our complete trust in God, to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, that He is indeed God. As Paul says, “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.” (Col. 1:15). It means that our loyalty is to God. When you’re loyal to someone you are pleased to do as they ask, to serve them.

The Bible gives a wonderful definition of what faith is in Hebrews 11:1. “Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.” Faith, then, is fully trusting in the word and promises of God. We can’t see the promise, no more than we can see a promise from a friend, but we trust God. It’s more than just trusting; we live with confidence that God’s promises and His word are true, and when we have assurance of this truth, we are at peace. God is not capable of lying; He is perfectly Holy. God is truth and His Spirit guides into truth and understanding.

So to abound in faith means that we are to overflow in our trust in God; we are to multiply in our trust in God; we are to live enthusiastically, walking in full assurance of God’s promises. So how do we do that, how do we live enthusiastically walking in full assurance of God’s promises?

Before I answer that I want to ask you this. Are you abounding in your faith? Are you living enthusiastically, walking in full assurance of God’s promises? If not, why? Have the difficulties and cares of the world overwhelmed you? Has busyness replaced time spent growing close to God? Maybe you’re so busy you don’t feel you have time to pray or read God’s word. Maybe you are suffering from an illness, or someone close to you has died, money is tight, or any number of other things are causing you to question your faith. Perhaps it’s the opposite of all that, maybe everything is going well, money is plentiful and life is good so you feel no need to have a relationship with the Lord. Sometimes the drudgery of life, the endless sameness and repetition, can cause us to become lethargic in our desire to know God. No matter what is causing you to lack in faith or to question your faith, to feel no desire to be close to God, no matter the reason, you can grow close to God again; you can abound in faith.

The reality is that all of these experiences that come up in our life can cause us to feel distant from God. Illness and death can cause us to question God’s love for us. Financial stress may cause us to question His provision to us. Prosperity may cause us to feel no need for God in our lives. We will most likely call out to God in our distress far more than when things are going well.

God’s promise to us is that “He will never leave us or forsake us” (Heb. 13:5). The truth is that we are the ones who distance ourselves from God. I urge you to call

out to God no matter what the circumstance, whether in poverty or riches, illness or good health. Honestly talk to God and your faith will overflow.

The pastor, who I sought out after first coming to know Christ, gave me this sage advice. "Never let your emotional state dictate your prayer life. Be honest with God, wherever you're at, and He will work in your life." It's good advice, but hard to do follow sometimes. If you need to, start out by saying to God, "Lord I don't want to pray right now", and see where it leads. God will help you if you make an honest effort to seek Him.

So, here's some ways to help you grow and overflow in faith.

First of all, we can't abound in faith, overflow with faith, on our own. The most important part of growing in faith is through the work of Christ's Spirit working in us to guide us and renew us. After all, faith is a gift from God, it comes from God. Remember our verse, "faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ." The Lord helps us to see the truth in His word, as seen in scripture, both in the words and teaching of Jesus; "for all scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives." (2Tim. 3:16) The Lord helps us to see the sense of His ways through the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Lord Jesus is the Word of God who came into the world. Read the opening verses of the Gospel of John and you'll understand what I mean. The bottom line is that we rely on God to have the faith to believe in Him in the first place, and we continue to rely on Him to maintain our faith.

Fellow believers are also an integral part of our faith, both in its formation and its growth. We hold each other up, encourage each other, and strengthen each other. Let's face it, our faith in God can be challenged by so many things happening in the world. Much of the world thinks we're deluded to believe in Christ, and that can wear on us. Our government and school systems teach us to believe in Darwinian Evolution and to live in whatever way we desire. They teach that truth is relative and that God is a myth. This is nothing new, for in 2 Peter 3:3 Peter reminds us that "in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires." We need each other to stay grounded in the truth of God and not fall prey to the lies of the world. Many passages of scripture speak to us about being in the world but not of it; about not becoming conformed to the world; that if we love the world then the love of the Father is not in us. Being part of a community who worships the one true God can help you to resist the lies of the enemy and abound in faith.

Another important part of abounding in faith is through the act of serving, through having a servant's heart. If you're not serving God by serving His children you're missing out on great blessings. I have learned that in serving, God grows your faith. Christ's desire for us is to use the gifts He has given us to serve one another. It doesn't have to be just in the church, it could be in helping your non-Christian neighbour, by cutting their lawn or shovelling their snow when they are unable to. The important part is that you have a heart to serve and you readily do so. You must put your faith into practice to truly abound in faith.

There is one more aspect of overflowing with faith, and it might seem strange at first. I'm not sure many of us do this, but I believe it is important. Remind yourself of your sin and just how much you have been forgiven through Christ's sacrifice. God sent His Son into the world to save the world and not to condemn it, (John 3:17) and Jesus was faithful to His Father in Heaven, obeying all that He asked of Him. (Phil. 2:6-11) Why, because we are His children and He loves us. The Lord Jesus willingly suffered humiliation, ridicule, torture and death on a cross so that we could have life. Just as importantly He defeated death; rising from the tomb and then ascending into heaven; where He resides even now interceding on our behalf.

The bottom line is that we deserve to die for our sin, because God's holiness is at odds with our depravity. If you think you have not sinned you are fooling yourself, "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) Your sin should bring you to a place of sorrow and regret, should cause you to cry out to God for forgiveness. If you are mature in your faith, knowing what Christ did for you should continue to elicit an emotional response. God in His infinite love has provided a way, through Christ Jesus, to pay the price for our sin; He has a glorious plan to redeem mankind. Read Colossians 1:15-23 to see that plan. Reminding ourselves of what God has done in Christ, strengthens our faith; reminding ourselves that His death and resurrection enables us to have eternal life, helps us to abound in faith.

I want us to take a moment of silence to remind ourselves of our sins and of how God, in His infinite mercy, has redeemed us through Christ Jesus, His Son. If you believe in Him, you have a glorious future with God and the promise of eternal life lived out in His presence.

There may be some of you out there right now who have never made this leap of faith, never truly acknowledged your need for a saviour. The fact that you are here today means there is something stirring inside of you, God is calling you to be one of His children. Why would you wait any longer; I tell you right now that if you reject God's gift in His Son, He will honour your choice. But why, when you could experience true forgiveness and healing; when you could enjoy what so many of us do, a close personal relationship with our Lord. Don't let your pride or your need to be in control cause you to reject God's love. The rational part of you will see the truth of God in His word and through His people, if you will only take an honest look. And oh what a mighty horde are those who have believed in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and whose lives have been transformed. Talk to anyone of them and they will tell you that knowing God has radically changed their life for the good. Christ's Spirit will help you to see the truth of this message of reconciliation, this message of hope. The hard truth is, that if you reject God in this life you will spend an eternity never knowing Him.

I urge you to accept God's gift in His Son, repent of your sins and abound in faith. What great rewards await you; peace in this life and for life eternal; a purpose and hope for the future.

Why don't you pray with me to receive Christ into your life' right now.

Lord open up the hearts and minds of those who can hear me; draw them close to you and forgive their sins as they honestly seek your forgiveness. Lord Jesus take them into your loving embrace, heal them and pour your Spirit out on them. We need you Lord and we love you. You have said that anyone, anyone who calls on your name will be saved. Hear our call Lord and make us yours. You have said that if we confess our sins you are faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Hear our call Lord and make us yours.

If you have prayed this prayer with me and given your life to Christ then you need to tell someone. Seek out any one of us who have received the power of Christ's forgiveness in our lives and we will walk with you and help you to abound in faith.

Remember to abound in faith means to overflow with trust and belief in Jesus Christ; to trust fully in the promises of God. Remember that faith comes from God, that it is a gift from God, and you need to spend time studying the Bible, praying, and relying on the Holy Spirit to guide you. Remember that we can't do it on our own; we need God and we need each other. Be part of a community of believers; surround yourself with friends who love the Lord, in order that you can encourage and strengthen each other in your faith. Remember to serve one another in love, to put your faith into practice. Remember to remind yourself of the miraculous love of God, who sacrificed His only begotten Son so that we might live and live abundantly.

Do these things and you will abound in faith, your faith will overflow, and you will walk closely with the Lord.

Alan Pohl

