

6/7/15

ESF, Lord's Day service message

### **How to Build Up Living Faith**

Mark 8:14-21

*<sup>14</sup> The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup> "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."*

*<sup>16</sup> They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread." <sup>17</sup> Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? <sup>18</sup> Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? <sup>19</sup> When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. <sup>20</sup> "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"*

*They answered, "Seven." <sup>21</sup> He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"*

After a near-fatal plane crash in WWII, Olympian Louis Zamperini spends a harrowing 47 days in a raft in open sea with two fellow crewmen before he's caught by the Japanese navy and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp. In the camp he was put in hard labor, and was repeatedly tortured.

But under such extreme life conditions, he never gave up hope, and his overcoming spirit was never broken. When people saw his life on the surface, they think that he had a very strong human spirit. But actual source of his unbroken spirit was his faith in God. He had living faith. How can we have such living faith as his?

→ Video clip <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/unbroken/louies-legacy>

There are two things that weaken our faith or even destroy our faith. They are: #1) the strong influence of unbelief around us, and #2) our own forgetfulness of God's blessings in our lives. In today's text Jesus teaches us how to overcome the influence of unbelief and the tendency of our forgetfulness of God's blessings, and how to make our faith living faith.

### **Overcoming the influence of unbelief**

There are two major trends of unbelief which destroy our faith. Jesus calls them "the yeast of Pharisees" and "the yeast of Herod." Jesus warns us to watch out for these two yeasts to protect our faith, and to keep our faith alive.

What does Jesus mean by "the yeast of Pharisees" and "the yeast of Herod?" By "yeast," he meant the influence of the teaching and the lifestyle of the Pharisees and Herod. Yeast in the Bible usually signifies an evil or sin which is very small, but has the power to influence and destroy our lives.

The reason Jesus calls the teaching and life style of Pharisees and Herod "yeast" is because they influence our faith little by little, but have very strong power to destroy our faith.

1 Corinthians 5:6-7 says ...*Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch-as you really are.*

The yeast of Pharisees is the teaching and practice that man can be righteous through keeping religious rules, regulations and traditions. The Pharisees believed in God and in the Scriptures as God's words for man, but they added rules, regulations, and traditions to God's words.

The Pharisees made many regulations and rules to obey God's words accurately and well. So their intention to make and follow them was good. But when they repeatedly did so, keeping the rules and regulations became fixed religious traditions. And they honored the traditions as much as they honored the Scriptures, or sometimes even more than they honored the Scriptures. They insisted on keeping and obeying the traditions in all circumstances. They judged themselves and others by seeing how well a person could keep the traditions. But it led them to serious errors and destroyed true faith (Matthew 23:1-37).

Their errors were:

1). Salvation by man's merit

It led people to think that their good behavior and their religious rituals and ceremonies made them acceptable to God. It promoted a religion of God's approval and salvation through man's good works and merits.

2). Hypocrisy

It led people to an external religion which emphasizes man's external behavior more than man's internal character. Such external religion made people hypocrites who cared about their outward behaviors rather than caring about what was in their hearts.

3). Self-righteousness

It led people to live with an attitude of self-righteousness and pride. If one kept the rules and regulations, he naturally felt righteous. The person might compare himself with others who didn't keep the rules and regulations, and be proud of himself.

To overcome such destructive influences of Pharisees' yeast, we have to put our faith firmly upon following the truth in the Scriptures.

1). Be righteous not by work but by faith.

We should not ignore the importance of good works. But it is not good works which makes us approved of by God. Man can be approved of by God as a righteous person only by faith. Good works are byproducts of our faith. Through good works we can glorify God. But the foundation of God's approval is not good work but faith. Salvation comes only through faith, not by work (Romans 1:17).

2). Fear God, who judges man through things in the heart.

Man has the tendency to judge people through their outward appearance, but God judges everyone according to the condition of their hearts (1Samuel 16:7). Take care of what is in your heart more than taking care of your outward behavior. Seek cleansing of your heart through the blood of Christ, not through your good works. See yourself and others through God's grace (Ephesians 2:5). Be graceful to other people's mistakes and sins as God is graceful to all sinners.

3). Be flexible in applying rules, regulations and traditions

We believers need rules and regulations to obey God's words well and accurately. We must follow them. But we have to be careful not to honor them as we honor the Scriptures. Religious rules, regulations and traditions do not have absolute authority as the Scriptures have. They are relative. We should not regard any religious rules or traditions as unchangeable truth. We have to be flexible to change them all the time to win lost souls in different generations and in diverse cultures (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

The yeast of Herod is ungodly secularism and humanism.

Ungodly secularism seeks happiness and satisfaction of life in man's power, pleasure, and money. It believes that when a person becomes rich, powerful and famous the person can be happy. It believes that the more money, power and fame you gain in this world, the happier you will become. It often rationalizes that to gain more power, more money, you can use any means in this world even if they are immoral or sinful-

**Commented [m1]:** I would argue that liberalism and humanism have very little to do with the belief that money and power are the keys to happiness. Humanism is for the betterment of humankind, in terms of things like quality and equality of life for all humans. Liberalism is similar.

manipulation, betrayal, compromising the truth with lies etc. (That is why Jesus called Herod “fox.”-Luke 13:32).

Secular humanism honors man more than honoring God. It puts man at the center of everything. It teaches doing good to human beings while it rejects anything related to obeying God.

When it comes to the believers circle, it teaches that not all the words in the Scriptures are true. It teaches that some of them are just man-made stories. It rejects absolute moral authority of the words of God. It teaches that some words in the Scriptures which define certain behaviors of man as sins should not be understood literally.

For example, the Scripture clearly defines homosexuality as sin. But some people are arguing that the word of the Scripture means a different thing today. How about the word of Scripture regarding keeping the day of Sabbath holy, or honoring God with your tithe? Some people dilute the meaning of those words. They teach that it is not necessary to keep Sabbath as a holy day. They teach that tithing is required only in the Old Testament times, so today we don't need to give full tithe but we may give whatever we can give or want to give.

**Commented [m2]:** What about the directives in the old testament that for man to eat shellfish, or cut their hair short, etc. are an abomination to God...?

So it compromises God's unchangeable, absolute truth with relative rules that can please human reason and convenience. The influence of such humanism and liberalism is very powerful. It can destroy many Christians' faith.

To overcome such Herod's yeast, we have to seek happiness and purpose of life in spiritual blessings and in God's eternal kingdom. Know that the power of this world is like grass and the flowers which eventually wither. Seek the lasting value of your life in spiritual kingdom.

Also, we must take the written Scriptures as God's final and absolute authority over our lives. We should never compromise the truth in the written Scriptures with the teachings of secularism and humanism. Take the words in the written Scriptures as the final authority of judging all human behaviors, attitudes, the wrong and the right, the good and the evil.

### **Remember what the Lord has done**

To build up our faith as living faith, we must constantly remember what the Lord has done in our lives.

The disciples had seen that Jesus multiplied just a few loaves of bread to feed thousands of people. After seeing that, they forgot to bring bread except just one loaf. They started worrying about bread. Their faith became weak. Then Jesus asked the disciples several questions and reminded them of what he had done. Jesus reminded them of the fact that he had multiplied bread on two occasions and fed over 10,000 people.

Why did they worry and argue over one loaf of bread when they had Jesus in the boat with them?

God's people often have tendency to forget his blessings. So, God tells his people repeatedly to remember what he has done for them.

*Deuteronomy 8:2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.*

*Psalms 105:5 Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced.*

God meets our needs, but when the next problem arises, we may complain or become frightened. To revive our weak faith and make it

living faith, we must keep remembering the blessed things that the Lord has done in our lives.

When you are worrying about things you don't have right now, try to remember what the Lord has done until today. What did he do when you had nothing? What did the Lord do when you were sick and lonely? What did the Lord do when you were in crisis? What did the Lord do when you had no place to go, no person to turn to? What did the Lord do when you were hopeless and helpless? As long as you remember the Lord who has faithfully taken care of you, you can be sure that he will care for you in all circumstances.