

The Affections Test

This is the Faith I live by: My affections affect my attitude
Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Thursday, June 13, 2019
Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the Earth."

Colossians 3:2

Affection is a strong word! What has your affection? Cars, people, wealth, or gossip? Maybe peace, love, and God have your affection? Perhaps you have an affection for a combination of all these things. But the fact of the matter is, God says that whatever has captivated your affection must be from the world above.

The Affections Test

In our theme passage, the phrase "set your affection on" literally means to "continually think of or continually give keen attention to." Check this scenario. What if you continually think of or continually give keen attention to your beautiful home in a gated community? Let's say you need renovations done that cost more than \$50,000. You come into some cash and find a highly recommended contractor that you share your dreams for your home with. After paying the contractor to begin, you find his work to be poor. As you walk in you see that your beautiful home retreat is now flooded, the additions are falling apart around you, and to make matters worse the contractor has no intention of making things right. Now what?

This is a true story. Fortunately, while he is extremely disappointed, his "affection" is not for his home. He is able to calmly, and yet courageously stick up for himself without becoming emotionally overwhelmed about the matter. He has a miraculous grasp of the God who sees all and who has his best interests at heart. His respectful reaction to this shows that his faith is strong. He continues to exhibit a godly demeanor, and remains hopeful that God will settle the matter in his favor.

Seek First...

Many times, our affairs do not go as smoothly as we hope. But scripture promises us that if we seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, then He will add peace, power, victory, and eternal life to our spiritual investment accounts. When our affections are set on things above, we can rest assured that these temporary and light afflictions will pass away. We can trust in this because our God who gives love, joy, and peace will soon return to give us our reward. And when He comes He will give us new bodies, and we will live in a new heaven and a new Earth. It's when we think of or continually give keen attention to these things that our hearts are purified and our minds are renewed.

By God's grace, this is the faith I live by. Let this be the same for you, in Jesus' name.

God Wants Me to Make an Impact

This is the Faith I Live by: In Christ I can make an impact
Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Wednesday, June 12, 2019

Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."

Ecclesiastes 9:10 NKJV

Death is not morbid. The Bible teaches us that we are here today, and sometimes gone today because tomorrow is not promised. Instead, I believe death can bring hope. Given the right perspective, we can see death as showing us that we have a certain amount of time to make a lasting impact on the world around us. We can make an impact on our families, through our faith, or even civically within our communities. There are a number of spaces that we can influence. No matter where we are, we can always make an impact.

What Will Your Legacy Be?

The question is: in the limited time we have, what kind of changes will you leave behind? What will your legacy be? When you die will people remember you for your love? Will they remember you for your undying dedication to the causes of the maligned? Maybe people will remember you for your zeal for the kingdom? Or will people remember you for your selfishness? Maybe they'll remember you for your foolish arrogance? And what if they remember you for your disregard for the common good?

In our theme passage, the wiseman gives us a royal charge to live like our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. When He encountered people He completely altered their current situation. For example, when Jesus met blind people He gave them new vision. Many times while traveling and preaching He encountered hungry people and always fed them both physically and spiritually. Or how about when He encountered proud people and humbly gave them a glimpse to His sovereignty as the mighty King of the universe. Or even when He encountered injustice and rebuked the oppressors with a whip He hand made. Jesus made an indelible impact on everything and everyone He touched. And He only had thirty-three years on this Earth. But the three and a half years of His ministry changed the world forever.

***It's not about how much time you have,
it's about what you do with the time
you're given.***

Make Every Moment Count

It's important as we think about our everyday decisions to determine that we will do our best to make each moment God gives us count for something. And when we gather together all the fragments of lasting, positive impact, they will comprise a respectable legacy that can be passed on for generations to come. This life is but a fleeting moment, but our impact must continue long after we are gone.

By God's grace, this is the faith I live by, let this be the same for you, in Jesus' name.

Where My Strength Lies

This is the Faith I live by: Faith is my strength

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Thursday, June 6, 2019

Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

Theme Text

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But 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 diligently seek Him. By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Hebrews 11:1-10

Life is Laborious

I must admit. This life is no cakewalk. There are so many obstacles that litter our paths everyday. We encounter unreasonable people, difficult assignments at work, bill collectors, flat tires, road rage, and so much more. We have internal struggles with low self-esteem, overwhelming guilt, feelings of anxiety or depression, sometimes we feel unappreciated by loved ones, and sometimes it's just hard to get through the day. And to top it all off, we have to deal with our sin problems. Some of us are addicted to food. Others of us are addicted to questionable entertainment. Some of us have questionable relationships. And others of us have pride and other dysfunctions to process. Honestly, if left to our own devices our lives would be a mess.

Are God's Expectations Unrealistic?

It doesn't help that God has lofty expectations of us. He said that we should be holy because He is holy. Then He added that we should have the mind of Christ. Not to leave out the part about not esteeming others higher than ourselves. Oh yeah! And don't forget, never lean on your own understanding, and make sure to seek Him first and everything you need will be added to your life.

How? How in the world can we have such odds stacked against us. From the

moment we begin developing in our mother's womb God has these desires for us. How in the world can we ever measure up?

Faith. The answer is faith. I admit this may sound like a cliché answer. It may even seem like it's missing something. But it's the truth. If the Bible says that it is impossible to please God without faith, it stands to reason that with faith, we can overcome all of our human inadequacies and ultimately please our heavenly father.

Faith Makes Up For Our Inadequacies

But what is faith? The Bible defines faith in our theme text cited above. I'd like to rephrase it in this way: ***Faith is the conduit through which God's power to live according to His will comes into our lives.*** Remember I introduced us to this concept yesterday. Whatever is impossible in our own strength, God makes possible through faith. When our faith lays hold of God's power we can overcome every evil tendency, doubt, weakness, and poor thinking pattern.

So my encouragement to you today is this: ask God to increase your faith. Ask Him to reward your tiny, mustard seed faith with His limitless power from Heaven. Take some time this morning to ask God to originate, nurture, and blossom the kind of faith that pleases Him. The kind of faith that can remove any mountain that stands between you and God's ideal for your life.

By God's grace, this is the faith I live by. Let this be the same for you, in Jesus' name.

Get Plugged In!

This is the Faith I live by: Faith is the cord that connects me to God
Message Magazine's Online Devotional for
Wednesday, June 5, 2019

Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Hebrews 11:1

Substance. Hope. Evidence. Faith. Get plugged in!

Hall of Faith

Faith is one of those principles that even if you don't understand every nuance, you use what you do know to understand it. For instance, we know that Jesus is the author and Finisher of our faith. We know that Abraham had faith that YHWH would bring Isaac back to life even though there was no record of resurrections before that time. In Exodus, we learn that Moses had faith the children of Israel would traverse the Red Sea and not drown with Pharaoh's army. In the New Testament we see that Peter had faith to walk on water with Jesus; albeit for a short time. And we know Jesus had faith that His Father's will was supreme as He faced the dismal separation of His crucifixion. What is the common denominator in all these examples?

How Does Faith Work?

Well let me see if I can give an example of how faith works. Imagine a power cord. Is there any power in the cord? Well, that depends on when you ask the question. Disconnected from an electrical source the cord has no power. Even when one end of the cord is attached to your iPhone or refrigerator, neither of these appliances will work if they are not plugged into the wall where they can connect to electricity. It is only when the cord is connected to an electrical source that it has any power.

Faith is similar. Faith is the cord that connects us to our Father. We can't activate our purpose, obedience, or righteousness when we are disconnected from God. Truthfully, we can't even serve others unless we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Which means that faith plays a role in our Christian walk that should never be underestimated. Faith is such an important factor in our daily Christian walk because living out what we believe is inhibited and incomplete whenever we are disconnected from God. Godly faith is the conduit through which all heavenly power and blessings move from God's storehouse into our lives. By faith, we move from dormant potential to empowered vessels for His glory.

So, it's time we get plugged in.

By God's grace, this is the faith I live by. Let this be the same for you, in Jesus' name.

How You're Kind of Like Mangos

This is the faith I live by: What I sow I will reap

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Wednesday, May 29, 2019

Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Galatians 6:7

I love it when God uses nature to get His point across. We may not understand complex, supernatural matters, but we can study and learn from many of the mysteries in nature. Sowing and reaping, while it is incredibly complex in its details, the basic outcomes are simple. You can't separate the crop from the seed. A Mango's natural materials will never, under any circumstance, produce a callaloo plant. And a callaloo's natural materials will never, under any circumstance, produce a fig tree. To do so is against nature. It is against the Creator's design. Sowing and reaping teaches us that outcomes are predictable.

Check the Fruit

Our spiritual lives are just like mangos. While many believe they can sow wickedness and somehow escape the naturally encoded outcome, the truth of the matter is they can't. We cannot mistreat the disenfranchised and continue to prosper. If we disregard the laws of health we cannot remain in good health. When we disregard the principles of God's word we cannot reap the rich rewards of the faithful. This principle teaches us that we cannot break the law of God and still have eternal life. It's not a matter of punitive action

as much as it is the spiritual law of cause and effect at work in God's holy order. Whatever anyone sows, as a lifestyle, that person will reap.

The following verses in a modern translation make both sides of the matter abundantly clear:

"Do not be deceived. God will not be made a fool. For a person will reap what he sows, because the person who sows to his own flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but on who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So we must not grow weary in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the family of faith."

Galatians 6:7-10 (NET)

We can sow for a blessed outcome, or we can sow for a detrimental outcome. But the choice is ours to make because we're kinda like mangos. Whatever seeds we plant we can predict what kind of fruit will grow. So if you're wondering about what you've sowed into yourself, just check your fruit. A mango seed will always produce a mango tree.

The Quest for True Power

This is the Faith I Live By: The Power of Jesus Christ is available to me through His Spirit.

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Monday, May 27, 2019

Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Romans 1:16

The pursuit of power is one of the most intoxicating driving forces in our world today. Many pursue power by creating popular music. Others pursue power by perfecting their athletic abilities. Still others pursue power by studying psychology in order to master the mind. But where can we find real power? Is it in books or on television? Can we gain real power by exercising until our muscles are perfectly sculpted? All of these things have an element of power inherent to them. Yet, they cannot change our lives from an eternal perspective.

Biblical Power

The apostle Paul had a true concept of power. He said that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. Truthfully, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been changing lives for thousands of years. This gospel is God's demonstration of His love toward a lost world. When He created us, His intention was that we live with Him eternally. However, since the inception of sin that plan seemed impossible to achieve. Since God knows everything, His plans include all eventualities into the equation. Meaning, sin was no surprise to God. Before the world was, God had a plan.

Power in Jesus Christ

Jesus covenanted with the Father that if humanity should sin He would become our substitute. God's love did not allow Him to simply watch from the sidelines as sin destroyed the lives of the ones He loved. Just at the right time, Jesus became a man, lived a perfect life, died as a perfect substitute, and rose from the dead to eternal perfection pardoning our sins forever. Now, Jesus is in the Heavenly Sanctuary interceding on our behalf. Because of His power we have access to the power of God. Because of Christ's sacrifice we have true power. The power of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. And one day, we will be restored to what God intended for us from the beginning. Let the reality of God's love and all that He sacrificed in order to save us permeate your thoughts today. Be encouraged. Believe the gospel. For in it we gain true power.

An All White Affair

This is the Faith I live by: Salvation gifts me Christ's robe of righteousness

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Monday, May 13, 2019

Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

"That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

Ephesians 4:22-24 (NKJV)

I hope you have a change of clothes handy, because we are going to an all white affair!

Don't Tell Me What to Wear!

I'm not going to lie to you. I don't like being told exactly how to dress if I'm going somewhere. If it's a formal affair I understand the need. Even work uniforms make sense to me. I even understand internationally themed celebrations. I promise I understand all of that. It's just that, I really don't like being told that I *must* wear exactly this or that, or else I cannot come in to an event. Like all white parties, which is why I've never been to one. It looks great in pictures. Everyone wearing white hats, shirts, blouses, pants, dresses, dress shorts, scarves, and everything in between. But, it's just not my thing.

Wardrobe Malfunction

Unfortunately, some of us have my attitude about all white parties. Especially the ones related to righteousness. We admire those whose characters have been washed clean and white in the blood of the Lamb. We love when people are kind, honest, loving, generous, joyful, and have integrity. But for some of us, it's just not our cup of tea. We admire certain righteous acts, but we have no real desire to produce those acts. And if we're truly honest with ourselves all that really means is that we have no real desire to be transformed by our righteous Heavenly Father. Instead, we'd rather snub

the event host and keep on our own attire like the man in Matthew 22. He decided to wear his own righteous garments to God's heavenly feast. Not realizing that the righteous robe of God was his access inside.

Wearing Christ's Robe of Righteousness

God has been so good to us. He has helped many of us recover from our spiritual wardrobe malfunctions and saved us from the consequences of sin. But in order for all of us to experience such a blessing we must be willing to take off our old, corrupt wardrobe and allow God to robe us in His righteousness and holiness. We have to allow God to finish His work in us by covering us in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If you think about it that way, allowing God to give you a change of clothes isn't all that bad after all. In fact, having experienced the change myself, I wouldn't have it any other way.

By God's grace, this is the faith I live by. Let this be the same for you. In Jesus' name.

Injustice is Everywhere...But Justice is Coming

This is the faith I live by: Justice is coming in Jesus Christ
Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Friday, May 17, 2019

Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

"As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness."

Psalm 17:15 (NKJV)

A Threat to Justice Everywhere

"INJUSTICE!" is the hue and cry that must summon the interest of every conscientious person who hears it. Innocents are murdered, while their murderers get off scot free. INJUSTICE! Some powerful people pimp and bend laws in lands around the world to suit their greed. INJUSTICE! Some create wealth on the backs of others forcing them to live paycheck to paycheck. INJUSTICE! The wicked seem to prosper, and the righteous seem to suffer. INJUSTICE!

I could cite many ways Lady Justice peeks above her hallowed blindfold trying to tip the scales in favor of equity only to no avail. It is a foregone conclusion that something is terribly wrong in society today. But God is not asleep. The One who see the secret sins of every person; the One who sees all the good that people do without an expectation of earthly reward; will reward all deeds done in the flesh, openly.

Justice is Coming

The psalmist understood that injustice was running rampant in the land. But, he also knew that the Creator would settle the score one day. We can have this same faith that God *WILL* avenge the deaths of those murdered with impunity.

God will avenge the honor of those abused and misused for some person's

filthy pleasure. He will avenge the integrity of those who have been lied on and punished for no good reason. God will avenge the blood of martyrs killed for His cause when bloodthirsty priests and prelates appealed to the strong arm of the state to take their lives. And finally, the psalmist well knew that the Creator would finally reveal Himself, in all of His glory, and put an end to injustice everywhere. And on that day it will never raise its ugly head again. Not only this, but He will also restore His perfect image in those who learned to trust in Him. Then He usher us into eternity, where justice will reign forever, and sin will be no more. By God's grace, this is the faith I live by. Let this be the same for you. In Jesus' name.

What We All Must Pursue

This is the Faith I Live By: I will see God if I pursue peace and holiness.

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord"

Hebrews 12:14 (NKJV)

Aspire. Pursue. Persist. Achieve!

With rare exception, people often give up too quickly. We all have dreams, and for a period of time we fixate on them wishing we could achieve them. It is a rare breed of people who see obstacles as inspiration, and use difficulties as fuel to propel them to their next goal. God wants us to put our trust in Him and know that nothing is impossible if we believe (Matthew 17:20).

From Spiritual Failures to Victorious Saints

However, today's thought is not just about our everyday achievements, although God does care about those. Most importantly, today's thought is about moving from being spiritual failures to becoming victorious saints. Our theme text exhorts us to pursue peace with others, and holiness. Does that sound familiar? The Ten Commandments are all about that. Love for God and our fellow human beings are the two great commandments that undergird the law. So in other words, holiness is achieved when we focus on God's love and His law. Do you see how this works? We receive peace and holiness when we set our focus like we do our goals and allow the power of the Holy Spirit to push us and discipline us as we run. I am not suggesting that these principles are eluding us. It's just that life's circumstances often sidetrack those who are not focused on the prize.

Pursue With Faithful Focus

Today can be your day to recommit to pursuing peace and holiness. Yes, there will be a multiplicity of trials, tribulations, temptations, and distractions to get you off track. This is why God promises us angels who excel in strength, along with the Holy Spirit, to provide us all the support we need to achieve God's standard of holiness. The fact of the matter is, without them none of us will see God. Let's cooperate with God and help others do the same.

By God's grace, this is the faith I live by. Let this be the same for you, in Jesus' name.

Heaven is My Home

This is the Faith I Live By: Heaven is my home

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Friday, May 10, 2019

Audio Link: <http://bit.ly/ThoughtsinWorship>

"But as it is written, 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'"

1 Corinthians 2:9 (NKJV)

There are many beautiful spectacles in the world. In nature, cascading waterfalls, towering trees, and fragrant flowers inspire awe in those who see them. We have built sprawling estates with many rooms, and space to house many families comfortably. In fact, gold and marble cover the floors and fixtures in many of our homes. Residences such as these are captivating.

Nothing on Earth Like Heaven

All this, whether natural or fabricated, is nothing in comparison to what God has for those who love Him. Truthfully, there is no language that can even encapsulate the splendor of all that God is preparing for His people. Many inspired writers have attempted to describe the revelations they received, but many could not find adequate words to capture what they saw. The imagination staggers as it tries to conjure up just a glimpse of God's reward.

There's a Place for Us

It is a blessing to know that the Lord loves us so much that He is preparing a place for us with Him. In spite of the obstacles that sin has put in the way of our relationship with Him, He has overcome them for those who simply surrender to His will.

Be encouraged by the promise Jesus made to His disciples. *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are*

many mansion; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3 NKJV). We look forward to that day with great anticipation. If we remain faithful to the end, we will live forever with Jesus.

By God's grace, this is the faith I live by. Let this be the same for you, in Jesus' name.