

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor Rolly Estabillo
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key verse: Luke 17:5

“LIVING EXPECTANTLY”

Today, we reached the last part of our series on “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous (in God’s eyes)”. We’ve been looking at the way we Christians should live in a wicked and crooked generation, as Jesus says. Because Christians are called to be in the world and not of the world. If we continue to persist on a behavior that is not worthy of our calling then that brings disgrace to the name of Jesus. In the past few weeks, we said that Christians should be positive, should be loving, then generous and thankful. Today, I want us to look at the characteristic of faith and living expectantly.

Hebrews 11:6 *“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”* How many of you are parents? How many of you are pleased when your children trust you? God is our heavenly Father and God is pleased when we trust Him. *“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”* It’s very important that you learn to live expectantly, that you learn to live by faith. The Bible says in Romans 14 *“Whatever is not of faith is sin.”*

In Luke 17:5 *“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’”* How many of you would like to have more faith? So would I. If that’s what pleases God, that’s what I want. I want to have more faith.

So the question then becomes, how does God build my faith? If faith is what makes life rewarding and fulfilling and confident, how does God build my faith? Do you take vitamins for it? Is there some kind of therapy that you go through to have your faith built? Is there some kind of seminar I can go to?

God builds my faith by testing it. By trying it. You see, faith is like a muscle. It is stretched, pulled.

Just like muscles develop when you test them against weights, your faith only develops as it is tested. You don't develop faith sitting on your blessed assurance in church. You develop faith by having it tested.

James 1:3 *"The testing of your faith develops perseverance so that you may be mature and complete."* Job, speaking from experience in Job 7:17-18 *"What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention, that you examine him every morning and test him every moment?"*

Let me share with you one fact of life: Every moment of the day, your faith is being tested. All this week, your faith will be tested. Every day you have faith-building opportunities. The problem is, most of us don't recognize them when they're there. So we flunk them. Because we don't realize that God is testing our faith in order to build it.

So if God wants me to live by faith and if God builds my faith by testing it, then the natural question is, How does God test my faith? This morning I want to give you the four ways that God tests our faith so you will be aware of them. They are very common. He tests you in every one of them. This week you will have these tests. Count on it. Because God wants you to grow in your faith.

HOW DOES GOD TEST OUR FAITH?

1. GOD TESTS OUR FAITH THROUGH DIFFICULTIES.

Trials, problems, pressures, tough circumstances. It's a fact of life. 1 Peter 1:6-7 *"For a little while you have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith...may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."*

These trials and problems come to test, to prove our faith. Nothing ever happens by accident in the life of a Christian.

I'm not saying God plans it all, but I'm saying that nothing comes into your life without God's permission. There are no accidents in the Christian life. He uses them in His great plan.

Sometimes God has to custom-make a problem to teach you faith, to test you. Jonah had a custom-made problem that swallowed him up and got his attention. Sometimes God creates problems that swallow you up and you can say, "There's nothing else to look at except the Lord." God uses difficulties to test our faith. It says "*all kinds*". If life were easy it wouldn't require any faith. So God uses difficulties.

God says in Isaiah 48:10 "*I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.*" When the heat is on, it's a test! Are you feeling the heat this past week? Are you under pressure? It's a test. The Bible frequently compares our problems and difficulties to a furnace of a refiner who heats it up so high that the gold and silver melt and all the impurities are burned away. I read about an old silversmith that was asked "How do you know when the impurities are burned away?" He said, "When I can see my reflection in the silver." When God can see His reflection in you He know that the impurities have all been burned away. God uses them to test our faith.

So how do I respond to difficulties? When the problems come, if God's trying to test my faith, how do I respond? James 1:2-3 "*Consider it pure joy, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.*"

James says when you have a problem, relax, rejoice, take it easy, thank God, praise God. Why? Because He is with me. He has a plan. He has a purpose. And He will help me make it through.

Therefore the first lesson is this: If I really want to learn to live by faith, I must learn to rejoice continually. James says, consider it all joy when you go through problems -- not thankful for the problem, but thankful in the problem.

2. GOD TESTS OUR FAITH THROUGH DEMANDS.

He asks us to do things that we think are impossible. You see, there are 1050 commands in the New Testament alone for believers to obey. Of those commands some of them seem unreasonable, some of them seem inconvenient, some of them seem impossible. But all of them are there for our own good. And they are there to test our faith. Like, "*Don't worry about anything*" or "*Do good to your enemy*" or "*Forgive other people*" or "*Be thankful in everything*". Every time God gives a command in the Bible, it's a demand placed on your life, it is a test. The test is will we trust what God says to do or are we going to do what we think is right in our own eyes.

In the story of the Israelites coming out of Egypt to go to the Promised Land, manna was a test. God said, I'll rain down manna every day and you pick up just enough for that day, but don't save any for tomorrow because I want you to learn to depend on me daily for bread. I want you to learn to live expectantly.

God says in Exodus 16:4 "*The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.*" God is testing you to see whether you're going to follow His instructions. He gives difficulties and He makes demands on your life and sees whether you'll obey Him. Often God asks us to do the impossible.

We know the story of Jesus feeding the 5000. Jesus told the disciples, "You feed them" and it was a big demand on the apostles. But he was just testing their faith. He already knew what He intended to do.

God came to Abraham one day, Abraham's 75 years old, and God says "I want you to go to a place you've never been". "Where am I going?" God says, "I'll tell

you." "How do I get there? I'll tell you. How do I know when I've got there? I'll let you know.

Would you go? Seventy five years old and he steps out in faith. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:8 "*By faith Abraham...obeyed and went*" because faith involves risking and you can't figure it all out in advance.

So what's the lesson? If I want to learn to live by faith I must not only learn to rejoice continually, I must learn to obey immediately. When God says it, I do it whether I understand it or not, whether it makes sense or not. That is a test of faith. If God tells you in the Bible to do something, you do it.

God tests our faith through difficulties and God tests our faith through demands.

3. GOD TESTS OUR FAITH THROUGH DELAYS.

If every prayer were immediately answered, if every need were automatically met, if every problem were automatically solved we wouldn't need faith and it wouldn't need to be stretched.

It is human nature that we don't like to wait. I personally hate to wait. That's why I get agitated when the traffic light takes forever in changing from red to green. We don't like lines, we don't like traffic jams, we don't like to wait in doctor's offices, we just don't like to wait. Yet a large percent of your life is spent waiting. And God uses delays to test your faith.

There's this book called Durations, the Encyclopedia of How Long Things Take. If you want some trivia.... It takes six seconds to fold a terry cloth towel. It takes ten seconds for a slinky to tumble down a full flight of stairs. It takes ten minutes for a snow flake to form.

It takes thirteen hours for weekly food preparation for the average American family. You want some more trivia? You have to wait.

The fact is: We hate to wait!

A good example in the Bible is the children of Israel. When they came out of Egypt they could have made it to the Promised Land in a matter of two to three weeks. But it took them forty years to go that little way. Why did it take so long? Deuteronomy 8:2 *"God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart."* God says, I do it to test you. They waited forty years for the Promised Land. Why? Because God was testing them.

Do you ever get in situations where you feel like you're in a hurry and you definitely feel that God is not? You want to ask the When? question. "God, when is my marriage going to turn around?" or if you're single, "God, when am I going to meet that right person?" or "How long is it going to take until I get well?" or "When am I going to find the right job?"

Have you been waiting for God to do something in your life? It just may be a test. Because God uses difficulties, and He uses demands, and He uses delays to build your faith.

Isaiah 64:4 *"God...acts on the behalf of those who wait for him."* It pays to be patient. The truth is, while you are waiting God is working. You may not see it. It may be behind the scenes. But while you are waiting -- if you are waiting in faith - - God is working.

Psalms 37:34 *"Wait for the Lord and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land."* God's been testing our church for 19 years about getting a building. If you're still hanging around, congratulations. You've passed the test so far. I don't know how much longer it's going to last. But you've made it this far. You've hung in there.

So what's the lesson? If I really want to learn to live by faith, I must learn to rejoice continually, I must learn to obey immediately, I must learn to wait patiently.

God wants to build your faith. He does it by testing us. He tests our faith with difficulties. He tests our faith with demands. He tests our faith with delays.

4. GOD TESTS OUR FAITH WITH DOLLARS.

God uses money as a test of your faith. For many people finances are the greatest test of all. They have absolutely no idea at all that God is testing their faith with what they have or what they don't have. This Christmastime, your faith will surely be tested.

In Luke 16:11, Jesus says, *"If you haven't been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"* Jesus is saying a truth that is taught all through Scripture that there is a definite direct relationship between how I handle my money and the spiritual depth of my life. He says if I am not faithful handling material wealth, He will not trust me with spiritual wealth. Money is a test. I can check out my checkbook. Where does my money go?

The fact is, what I do with my money determines how much God can bless my life. That's taught all through Scripture. You see, trying to earn too much money in order to amass things will make you lose your devotion to Jesus. Focusing on material things will make you lose your focus on Jesus.

Nothing wrong with buying stuff but if we're not careful, material things will possess us instead of us possessing material things.

Jesus warn us, *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."* (Matthew 6:24)

In summary, let's go back to the first question. Do you really want the Lord to increase your faith? Do you really want God to increase it? The Bible says, *"Without faith it is impossible to please God."* Yet it also says, *"With faith all things are possible."*

So here's the question: In which of these four areas is God trying to build your faith by testing it right now?

Is He testing your faith through difficulties? Some of you are going through incredible times right now. Life is really tough. We are in a spiritual warfare. The devil knows what this church is trying to do right now.

Is God testing your faith through a difficulty? If He is then you need to pray, "Father, help me learn to rejoice continually knowing that You have everything under control, knowing that You are with me, knowing that You have a purpose, knowing that You will give me the power to make it. I'm going to rejoice continually in this situation."

Is God testing your faith through demands? What is it in your life that you know God has told you to do but you keep putting it off? It's not a matter of knowing what to do. It's a matter of doing it. What is it that God has told you to do? Maybe it's to get in shape. Maybe it's to start reading your Bible. Maybe it's to be baptized. Maybe it's to tithe. Maybe it's to forgive that person that you've been holding a grudge against. It could be any number of things, but you know it's right, you know you ought to be doing it. And God is testing your faith by the instructions He's given you to see what you're going to do about it.

If that's the test you're in right now, you need to pray, "Lord, help me to obey immediately, not tomorrow, not next week, today."

How about the third test. Is God testing your faith through delay? What is it that you have been expecting God to do in your life and it hasn't happened yet? You're waiting and saying, "God, when? How long? Why hasn't it happened yet? Why haven't You answered my prayer?" If you're in the test of delay, my suggestion to you is don't give up. Look up. You need to pray, "Lord, help me to learn to wait patiently."

Is God testing your faith through dollars? You have been wanting something and you can afford it but you know you don't need it. But the temptation is real. You've made mistakes in the past and they've put you in a deep financial hole. Only God can get you out of it. You need some help. You start by asking God for forgiveness for focusing on material things instead of focusing on the spiritual. You pray, "God, I'm sorry for having all my priorities wrong. Please forgive me for putting material things first instead of you." And you know, there is hope. Because God is faithful. Just expect him to do the miraculous. He can provide for you. He can make things right for you. All you need to do is to have faith in him and it will please God.

Folks, I've been talking about faith this morning. Faith that will help you to live successfully. A living faith that will help you to navigate the treacherous waters of life. If you're a Christian already, you need this because life could be harder for a Christian. Do you notice that it seems like there are more trials and more temptations and more testings when you're a Christian? Jesus did not promise you a bed of roses. You know, nevertheless, that Jesus will help you to survive because he says, "In this world you will have troubles. But take heart; I have overcome the world".

If you're not a Christian, however, you need more than a living faith. You need saving faith. You may survive but eventually you'll perish like everybody else. Do you know where you'll go when you die? Christians know they'll go to heaven. And I want you to have that assurance as well. Jesus says, "*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life*". (John 3:36)

To receive eternal life there are three steps you need to take.

1. Admit that you're a sinner.

Just like me and everybody else in this room. In fact, no one is perfect. Do you know that no one is good too? The Bible says "*There is no one righteous, not even*

one... there is no one who does good." (Romans 3:10,12) Why is that? Because we were all conceived in sin. Adam and Eve, our first parents, sinned and they passed this sin to us. The Bible says, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*. (Romans 3:23) Because of sin, we all die. Death is the penalty of sin. *"For the wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23) Death is separation not only from your loved ones but also from God for all eternity. But God loves you and he wants you to be with him in heaven.

Admit you're a sinner. That's the first step to get to heaven. The second step is to

2. Believe that Jesus died and rose again for you.

Because you're a sinner you cannot save yourself. No amount of good works can outweigh the misdeeds, the wrongs, the sins you committed in the past. Some people think that because they give alms to the poor, they serve in church, they go to church, they are a good father or mother or child or they obey the Ten Commandments that they will earn merits and go to heaven. No, we're all condemned to die and we're going to hell.

But God loves us so much he gave his only Son Jesus to die for our sins. He died so that our sins will be forgiven. And you know what, Jesus did not remain in the grave forever.

Because he rose from the dead on Easter Sunday. He conquered sin and death forever. He wants you to conquer sin and death forever, too. Which takes you to the third step. Admit you're a sinner, believe that Jesus died and rose again for you, and thirdly,

3. Commit your life to Jesus.

It means surrendering your life to Jesus. It means making him your personal Lord and Savior. Allowing him to take full control of your life.

Telling him, “Lord Jesus, I have been directing my own life. I have been living life on my own. Forgive me for my sins. But now I want to live a different lifestyle from now on. Please guide me and direct me. Please be the driver of my life. I’ll take the back seat and you take control of the steering wheel.”

Jesus says, “*All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.*” (John 6:37)

Do you want to live a new lifestyle from now on? Come to the Lord Jesus. He is waiting eagerly for you to make that decision. Today is the day of salvation as the Bible says.