

BACK TO THE BASICS OF FAITH

Introduction: *Get Your Mind and Heart Prepared*

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV) tells us that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Just about every Christian has a basic understanding about the meaning of this verse, but we've reached an impasse as people of God where a basic understanding is no longer enough. There's a prevailing feeling of disillusionment in the air. It's almost palpable. You can feel it when you go to the grocery store, at work, even at home. Nothing seems to satisfy people's appetite for the fantastical, and as the boundaries of civility are stretched thinner and thinner, basic human decency is disappearing at an alarming rate. We are confused and quite frankly, many of us are just plain sad. We no longer believe in the goodness of man, therefore we no longer believe in ourselves.

"No longer believe in ourselves..." That's a surprising thing to hear, but it's true. Through the perplexing and tumultuous rigors of our present time, we are losing touch with ourselves. As the devil and his henchmen run amuck, deep down some of us no longer believe that we can win God's way. This is why we have to get back to basics, where a rudimentary, yet comprehensive understanding of God's Word becomes our central focus.

We were almost there...heading down the right path...prosperity flowing, relationships flourishing, and praises abounding; then all of a sudden the bottom fell out. The economy plummeted, and it did so with a vengeance. The effects have been devastating. As we try and dust ourselves off and pick up the pieces, we find that not only are the pieces not what we expected, but we don't know how they fit or where they belong.

The rules of engagement haven't changed. God's Word is still the same, but let's face it, the pieces are unrecognizable because we have changed. As a whole, we cannot see what we see in our world daily and not change in some way. Things seem to worsen by the minute, and it's as though we are all waiting on some humongous event to define and bring clarity to all of this mayhem and drama. Will it happen? Could things get any worse than they are now? They might, but our charge isn't to focus too much on the events of this world. Our mission is to always keep our eyes on Jesus Christ and to forever be spiritually prepared.

We can say what we will, but the problem can be summed up in the fact that our eyes were never quite focused on Christ, and still aren't to a great degree. We are going about our business, begging God to help us get through and make it another day, but we aren't doing anything of consequence to prepare for what is ahead. Our armor isn't polished and our spiritual muscles are flabby. If it has accomplished

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nothing else, these turbulent times have revealed that. They have shown us a clear reflection of who we are at the very core.

These times have not brought us closer together. They haven't caused us to restore family values and to treat each other better. Neither have they prompted us to usher in the new revival that has been so vehemently preached and prophesized for years. We have allowed the troubles of this world to drive cynicism deeper into our hearts, occupying space that should be reserved for the love of God. We've allowed the quest for positions, possessions, and people to steal our zeal for the work of the kingdom. We've got just a slither of time for correction...just a little more prep time to figure out who we are genuinely and authentically through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and then get ta' doing what we were placed on this earth to do.

There's a saying, "*If you snooze you lose.*" Meaning that if you continue to sleep, your lights might go out entirely. You may not ever get to where you could have gone, all because you fell asleep on the job and refused to wake-up. Even if you are in the faith-you can't go back to who you were before the bottom hit the ground. You've got to understand that some aspects of your life needed to be pruned in order to make room for a new spiritual depth and a greater walk in Christ.

Faith requires that you let some things go and make room to increase and expand your commitment to God and His purpose for your life. He knows that we've been waiting on some things and that our hearts and minds may grow weary in the wait, but we cannot give up. Hope takes a tremendous amount of energy. The Apostle Paul said to the Church at Philippi in Philippians 1:20 (NLT) "*For I live in eager expectation and hope that I will never do anything that causes me shame, but that I will always be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past, and that my life will always honor Christ, whether I live or I die.*" Our eager expectation must be focused on being bold for Christ. We must have confidence that right this very moment we are poised with everything we need to represent him forthrightly, and anything that stands in the way of that we must be resolved to release.

So all and all, these are some pretty crucial times, and make no mistake about it, if you are unwilling to seize the moment...if you allow yourself the luxury of apathy, God will allow you to miss the opportunity. Hosea 4:6 says "*MY people*" are being destroyed for a lack of knowledge. God was talking about His folks. They reaped death and darkness because they refused to tune in to His directives. They refused to hear and then act accordingly. Don't let it be said of you. Our hope must be in Christ, fully and completely. The times no longer afford a half-hearted approach, but one in which we can unequivocally say "For God I live!" Take this opportunity to get back to the basics of faith, and to understand the truth of why you were called to this great privilege of continuing the legacy of our extraordinary Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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