**Measuring Spiritual Growth**

**Faith That Hears**

**Romans 10:17**

**Introduction**

In this series we’re learning how to develop and use the faith that we already have and go from little faith to great faith, and from great faith to perfect faith just as Abraham the father of faith did in his life.

The Bible says that “without\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ it is impossible to please God.” The bible says that whatever is not of faith is \_\_\_\_\_ and whenever we come to God we must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Principle #1 Romans 10:17, Faith comes by what you hear.

Principle #2 Hebrews 11:6, Faith is developed by what you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Principle #3 Romans 12:2, Faith is developed by what you think.

Principle #4 Matthew 21:21, Faith is developed by what you say.

Principle #5 James 2:17-18, Faith is developed by what you do.

Principle #6 Romans 4:20, Faith is developed by what you praise.

Faith hears, faith sees, faith thinks, faith speaks, faith works and faith \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Romans 10:17, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God.”

1. **The Revelation of the Word**

In the Gospel of John the word, “Word” in the original Greek is the word “Rhema.”

And while there are times when the word “Rhema” and the word “Logos” are used interchangeably in the New Testament, the word “rhema” is, basically, used to define how the Holy Spirit takes the “logos” and speaks that word, specifically and personally, and directly into your spirit, so that the written word, called “the logos” produces a living promise within you called the “rhema”. Rhema is when the written Word becomes a living Word within your heart and life. It is when the Holy Spirit takes the divinely inspired written Word and causes it to become God-breathed, God-infused living truth and manna from heaven to your soul and spirit. Instead of a statement of promise in holy writ, the Holy Spirit causes it to become God’s personal promise to you. That’s what is meant by a rhema word of God.

Now, the word “Logos” is also a Greek word that means “word.” Some forty years before John wrote his Gospel, there was a man in the city of Alexandria named Philo. He was a Hellenized Jew who became a philosopher and theologian and wrote hundreds of books about God and about philosophy. He was the one who took a Greek word, Logos, which is translated “word” in English, and used that word “Logos” to represent all there is to know about God. The only problem was that most Greek philosophers and even many of the Hebrew religious leaders of that day, didn’t believe that a person could actually know God personally. To many of them, God was an abstract being. God could only be known conceptually. And in their judgment there was very little you could actually know and understand about God. So Philo took the word, Logos, to try and describe everything that is knowable and understandable about God.

The Apostle John picks up on this popular teaching and writes in his gospel, “In the beginning was the Logos.” But according to John, that word was not a concept, or an ideal, or something abstract. That Word, that Logos, was a person, the man Jesus Christ. John says that Jesus is everything that is knowable and understandable about God.

John takes it one step further and says, Not only is God understandable and knowable, but God has made himself available to us. You can actually have a personal relationship with God. That was groundbreaking teaching! It’s an incredible truth! In verse 14 of John Chapter 1 John writes, “And the Logos (the Word) became flesh!” All that is knowable, all that is understandable about God came to live in human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the ultimate picture of the Logos becoming Rhema. That’s why Jesus could say to his disciples, “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.”

Now the Greeks had a hard time accepting this. They couldn’t believe that God could actually live in a human body. They believed that the body was plagued by evil. It was the prison house of the soul. They saw the body as the tomb of the spirit. It was beyond their human understanding to accept the idea that God could ever live in a human body.

But John writes in the Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh.” That is the message of Eternal Life! That is the message of life transformation! That is the message of the gospel, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

1. **The Power of the Word**

What is a word? A word is simply an expression of a thought. For instance, you can have the most complimentary thoughts and feelings about someone, but if you never say it with words, that person will never know how you feel. You can only know what a person is thinking if they start speaking. Our thoughts are explained by what we say. That is the meaning of the word, “Logos”. A word is an expression of a thought. Jesus as the Living Word, came to express and reveal the thoughts and ways of God to us. That is the only way we have of understanding God. Since Jesus is the expression of God’s thoughts, it is through Jesus that we learn and know how God feels about us. It’s through Jesus that we know God loves us. Jesus came to express what God said in Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

But how do you know what God feels about you? Well, you have to listen to the Word. You have to listen to Jesus because he is the expressed thought of God. Some people hear the words but they’re not listening. You can tell a person you love them; you can tell them how special they are, but they may not listen to you Dbecause they just don’t believe you! Faith comes by hearing! When you listen to the message of God’s love, the Holy Spirit breathes upon the Word of God, the Logos, and it comes alive in a living promise and revelation to your heart.

When the Logos becomes personal and specific, it springs forth in faith and trust and becomes a, “rhema”, God’s personal promise to you! As you respond to God’s personal expression of God’s love and grace by believing and trusting in Jesus, the Holy Spirit can cause the written promise of God’s Word to become a specific and personal promise for you. When you hear and believe the Word of God, the Holy Spirit releases within you the faith of Jesus Christ. That is the kind of faith that moves the mountains, the kind of faith that calms the sea, the kind of faith that defeats the giant.

When you ask, “What is the will of God?” just look at Jesus. If Jesus did it, it’s the will of God, because He came to do His father’s will! Don’t make God so mystical. Don’t make God so abstract. Don’t make God so unknowable and mysterious. God has come down to our level in human flesh. When we see Jesus and follow in His footsteps and witness his miracles and hear his parables and listen to His teachings, we can say, “Jesus, I know you are God!” At last, we can know and understand God, we can relate to God because he’s made himself available and approachable through Jesus.

Have you ever had the experience of reading God’s Word and suddenly it’s like a light come on and you get a sense of profound understanding and the words just leap off the page and come alive right before you in living truth? That’s “Rhema” and that’s the power of the word at work.

1. **The Reality of the Word**

Where some people get themselves into trouble with the faith message is when they move from faith to presumption. Just because you read a promise in the word of God does not mean the Holy Spirit is obligated to quicken that word personally to you. Just because you write it down and read it every day does not make it is a “rhema” word from God to you. We have to be careful that in our zeal to see God work miracles and do mighty wonders, that we move from faith to presumption.

Only Jesus, as the great physician can heal. All the confessing and reading and quoting scripture can’t heal you. Only Jesus can heal you. But when Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit breathes life into one of those precious promises and quickens it directly and personally to you, how many of you know nothing can prevent it from coming to pass. Don’t just claim the promises believer, let the promises get a claim on you! Allow Jesus, who is the living Word, to place the promises of God into your heart so they can become God’s personal blessing and benefit for your life. God speaks directly and correctly to us through the Word of God, the Bible. The promises of scripture are God-breathed and God-inspired.

One word of caution, while it’s wonderful to hear the voice of the Spirit through impression and visions and dreams, the New Testament truth is the written Word of God always takes precedent over all other forms of revelation. As we head to the end of the age, the Bible is full of warnings about the many voices that will be speaking and how they will draw away many from the true faith. Don’t listen to every wind of doctrine. Don’t listen to every voice that speaks. Listen to the voice of God as he speaks from the pages of Holy Scripture.

Paul tells Timothy to “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.” God’s Word is life changing. There are situations and circumstances in life that are absolutely beyond your control. The only way for you to overcome is to call on Jesus and ask him to provide you with the strength and the courage to overcome. The good news is that Jesus will give you strength and he will give you courage and he wants to speak that personal word of victory into your heart so that in the face of oppression and opposition you can say, “I take my liberty in Christ and I resist you Satan because I’m standing upon the Word of God and his promise to me.” If you can hear what the living Word is saying, you can say what Jesus said, “Get thee behind me, Satan, for your only mission is to be a hindrance to the will and plan of God.”

It is hard to connect with the voice of strength and confidence when you’re completely paralyzed by the circumstances and you’re overcome by fear. But remember, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” In your weakest moment, out of the depths of your spirit, Jesus can speak as the living Word to you. If you listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and hear the Word of God, you will be victorious and you will overcome by faith. The faith of the Son of God comes to your aid and Jesus awakens within you his strength and his power to be victorious.

But not only does faith come by what you hear, doubt also comes by what you hear. That’s why it’s important to surround yourself with people of faith. Because doubters will discourage you, they will challenge you; they will try to keep you from exercising your faith. You need to cultivate friendships with people who will encourage you to walk in faith and will allow you to encourage them to walk in faith. Build relationships with those who believe in you and will allow you to believe in them.

Resist negative influences in your life. What we need are positive, faith building relationships that encourage us to live and walk in faith and overcome all those negatives. Don’t listen to the voice of doubt. Don’t listen to all the negatives. Listen and hear the voice of faith encouraging you and strengthening you and causing you to exercise and develop your confidence in Christ. You will only destroy your faith if you give in to doubt and start complaining and criticizing and fault finding. You can turn a once vibrant optimistic faith life into the voice of cynicism and inactivity by simply listening to the voice of doubt.

The choice is up to you. You decide whether you are going to be a person of faith and live a positive, victorious overcoming life in Christ, or whether you will become a Skeptic full of doubt and negative criticism and bitter resentments. You can’t be a doubter and also be full of faith. Doubt and faith live on opposite sides of the street! You can’t be positive and be negative at the same time. Choose to be a positive, victorious, overcoming believer. Choose to hear what the Word of God says and reject the voice of this world when it conflicts with God’s Word!

The Bible is the living Word of God. It is the way of truth. The Bible is eternal life changing scripture. As we allow the Holy Spirit to quicken the Word of God to our heart, we grow in faith and as we exercise that faith we realize what Jesus meant when he said, “You can have what you believe for because with God, all things are possible.” Christ can help us find a job. He can help us pay the rent. He can deliver us from that disease. He can heal us from that sickness. He can restore our broken relationships. All we have to do is believe! Don’t listen to the pessimist. Don’t listen to the skeptic. Listen to voice of Faith. Listen to the Word of God. Listen to the author and finisher of faith, Jesus.

**Conclusion**

Elijah was a man that James Chapter 5 says, was subject to like passions as we are.” He hears the voice of God and exercises his faith and goes and tells King Ahab that God is going to shut up the heavens and there’s not going to be any rain until God says so. He’s feeling pretty good about things, until he learns that Queen Jezebel says, “Well, we’ll just see about that!” She puts a bounty on his head and they start putting up wanted posters in all the towns of the kingdom. “Wanted! Elijah, dead or alive.”

The next scene you see is that of this great man of faith and power, fleeing in fear for his life! But thank God, Jesus doesn’t give up on us if we have a lapse in faith.

Elijah hears the voice of God again. And God tells him to go tell Ahab that rain is coming. I Kings 18:41 says, And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." A big storm is on the way.

How did Elijah hear that storm? There were no clouds in the sky, no thunder or lightning, and yet he says, "I hear it." By the ear of faith he heard it. Verse 42 tells us that Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees and prayed. While the King was eating and drinking Elijah was praying. What a lesson!

Elijah prayed earnestly. He was sincere. He was humble. He really had a deep desire for the Lord to answer his prayer. But what I want you to notice is that before he saw anything, Elijah heard the sound of rain. When you’re listening to the voice of God you hear the sound of things that are to come because faith comes by what you hear, and hearing by the Word of God.

A young boy named Samuel is asleep in the priest’s quarters in the temple one night and just after the lights go out, the sound of a voice awakens him. It is the voice of the Lord calling out to Samuel, “Samuel, Samuel!” So Samuel gets up and goes to Eli the priest to see what he wants. Eli says, “I didn’t call you. Go back to sleep.” And then it happens again. But Eli realizes that Samuel is hearing the voice of God and so he instructs him on how to respond. Thank God for good mentors. The bible says that the Lord came again just like the other times and said, “Samuel, Samuel!” Samuel answered and said, Speak, for your servant hears you because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Abraham takes his son up on the mountain to sacrifice him; and he prepares the altar and binds Isaac as the sacrifice and is about to take his life when he hearsthe voice of God. God calls out, “Abraham, Abraham!” And Abraham says, “Here am I.” And God says, lay not thine hand upon the lad for I know that you fear God and have not withheld your son from me. When he looked up he saw a ram caught in the thicket and as you know the ram became the sacrifice. But what I want you to see is that Abraham heard the voice of God before he ever saw God’s plan of deliverance. Because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

In Luke Chapter 2 verse 8 some shepherds were tending their flocks, “And lo the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid.” And the angel said unto them, “Fear Not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord.” What I want point out to you is that they didn’t see the Savior, they didn’t know about the Christ-child until they heard the voice of the angel. Because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

If you allow faith to be quickened within your heart by the Word of God you can have what you believe for. So remind yourself when you wake up each morning, “This is the day that the Lord hath made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!” Let the breath of God flow into the temple of your heart and rejoice and say, “It’s going to be a good day!” Because faith comes by what you hear.

Are you listening? Are you really listening? What do you hear? In each of the letters to the seven churches in the book of the Revelation, Jesus says, “Let him that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.” Because faith comes by what you hear!