

“More Precious Than Gold”

1 Peter 1:6 - 9

“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that your faith — more precious than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

So by way of introduction, a question: ***what do New Zealanders value?***

If you were pick your top 3, what would you pick?

Have chat and see what you come up with.

Family

Individualism

Ingenuity

Some years ago sociologist identified these traits:

Earthiness

Informality

Modesty

Fairness

Restraint

What's not found on this list and most lists in general is faith.

Faith in God.

Faith in Jesus.

Faith that is talked about in our passage this morning.

And when you read about it in this passage this morning says that it terms of its value – it's what?

Your faith, your faith, is more precious than gold.

That word precious is literally exceedingly valuable.

And we know how valued gold is our world today as it was in the ancient world.

Gold has been valued across time and is still the standard today.

For example, 500 grams of gold – so an amount the size of a block of butter – is worth around NZ\$120,000 (so similar price to butter😊).

And we're told here in 1 Peter your faith is more precious, exceedingly more valuable than gold (or butter...)

When you talk about faith though, and we've talked about this before, you have to define it.

There are whole lot of ideas floating in our world and in our churches about faith.

When we talk about faith it has a number of overlapping aspects to it.

One aspect of Faith is *belief*, belief about God.

Christianity has certain content that we mentally assent to being true.

We acknowledge that certain things are true about God and what he has done in the world.

We believe that Jesus is the world's true King and that God raised from him from the dead.

We recite the Apostles Creed which is summary of those aspects the Christian religion acknowledges as true.

Paul says to Timothy — and you can read this in 1 Timothy¹ - watch your doctrine closely. Keep watch over what you believe.

So what you believe matters and that is one aspect of faith.

Faith is also *trust*.

Having confidence, conviction, assurance.

At a *heart* level we truly believe the God will do what he promises.

We have confidence that God is absolutely reliable.

We have this inner conviction that our deepest needs for meaning, purpose and identity are found in Him.

The trust enables us to act on what we believe. You can trust Him.

Faith is *allegiance*.

It's giving our hearts highest commitment to Him alone.

It manifests itself in obedience.

In the face of opposition and competing claims on my life, it says I will bend the knee and bow my heart to no other.

It's faithfulness to God.

¹ 1 Timothy 4:16

So it's this faith in all its different aspects that is so precious, so exceedingly valuable.

We value it.

It's precious in eyes of God.

Faith actually pleases God.

C.S. Lewis – author of the *Narnia* Chronicles and *Mere Christianity* – wrote that the devil's cause is never more in jeopardy than when a human, no longer desiring but still intending to do God's will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, asks why he has been forsaken, and yet obeys.

Our faith is precious to God.

We cannot forget that.

And sometimes as precious as it is, it takes a battering.

We suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

You have one of those days, one of those weeks, one of those years.

Something happens to you or you do something and your whole world is turned upside down.

It's like you wake up one day and you go, "What the..? How the..? Where did that come from???"

It can be battered in all sorts of ways.

It could be an intellectual.

You read a book or an article or a social media post that seems to call into question a core Christian belief and it's one you've never faced before. Or even friend or colleague and they just fire one question after another about God and Christianity and you just feel yourself on the back foot all the time.

It shakes you.

It could be a child, even an adult child and they've made decisions and their values don't line up with your own. You did your best to bring them up to know God and you hoped they would be walking with the Lord but it's not happened.

It could be a diagnosis of long term illness.

I've shared before that in our first year of marriage I was diagnosed with depression, and it was hard. Hard on me and hard on Kay. Thankfully it was only a year and up this point it has not revisited me. For some people it's much more persistent. That was one kind of illness.

It could be loss, losses of all kinds; loss of employment, loss of a spouse, loss of a significant relationship, loss of a dream, loss of a lifestyle – loss of all different kinds.

You name it and list could go on.

And it's at that point that this most precious possession – our faith in God – is put to the test.

When we go through stuff it's like the stuff we go is like an examination.

Our faith is put under a microscope – is it the real deal.

And the sad thing is, not everyone passes the test.

I've share briefly before about Bart Campolo.

Bart Campolo is the son of Tony Campolo.

Tony Campolo was a well-known Christian speaker and evangelist in the 80's and 90's who had tremendous impact on young people across the globe.

So his son Bart was 15 when one day he was approached by a youth leader in a MacDonald's restaurant who chatted to him and then straight up said, "Do you know Jesus? You need to know Jesus." And right there, under the Golden Arches, Bart was led to say the sinner's prayer.

From there Bart attended church every Sunday, Bible studies, prayer meetings, youth group and huge youth rallies.

He was all in!

Later he moved in among the urban poor to bring some hope and perhaps alleviate some suffering (where he saw some terrible things). He wanted to see this world changed for the better. Like his father he became a sought after speaker among Christian groups.

While he was a youth worker a 9 year old girl was sexually abused.

After visiting her he came away with doubts like never before. How could God allow this?

The years went by and two of his close friends came out as gay, as homosexual.

So Bart saw these two friends who he really liked and was trying to reconcile what he read in the Bible.

So what he did it was like he took a vivid (metaphorically) – a black vivid – to his Bible and he drew a line through all the passages where God doesn't certain behaviours.

And this sparked off other huge doubts about the Bible and he said, and Bart he was “only interested in a God who would save everybody. It didn't matter that the Bible had some verses that said something different.”

From there Bart rejected all the supernatural elements, no longer believed that God does miracles or that Jesus was raised from the dead or that other religions were false.

Then the final straw came when he had a cycling accident.

While recovering – lying in on a bed in hospital, he heard himself say –

“When this body dies, I think that will be the end of Bart Campolo.

I don't think I will be going anywhere. I don't believe in eternal life in that way anymore.”²

For him the Christian faith is an ancient myth and supernatural fairy tale.

Today Bart Campolo continues to speak, has a podcast and writes books as a self-identified atheist.

So Bart when he went to church and youth group and so on, he was so drawn by the sense of community and the common commitment to love people, promote justice, and transform the world.

But again Bart said, “All the dogma and the death and resurrection of Jesus stuff was not the attraction.”

It's a reminder that one of the reasons our faith is so exceedingly valuable is because the end result is our... salvation.

² “Tony Campolo's surprise reaction when his son came out as a humanist”
<https://religionnews.com/2014/10/06/bart-campolo-tony-campolo-humanist/>

So here's the thing, no one begins their journey with Jesus thinking "One day I gonna chuck it all in!"

But people do.

I know people and you probably know people who've done that who you never imagined it could have happened to.

They don't pass the test.

So what is our response?

Well for one, God wants us to pass the test.

And since that's the case, if our faith is more precious than gold, and we want to pass the test, then you and I need to bolster, to fortify, to augment to strengthen our faith.

The question then is: how do *you* do that?

"How do you strengthen your faith?"

What practices do you have, where's your go to places, people and resources? Tell the person next to you.

Of course you cannot overestimate the place of personal prayer and reading the Bible, where we stay close to God.

Alongside that there ways we can bolster our faith.

I read.

I have books on my shelf that address some of the pressing issues of our time. So for example if I'm pressed by specific question I can grab a book off the shelf that (hopefully)addresses that.

I watch podcasts.

We live in an age where there so much good material that is only a mouse click or a swipe away. So many people who've walked the walk and gone into deep into places where most of us can't.

What about a mentor?

I know of someone who sensed a call to pastoral ministry. He accepted into training and attended what he thought was a Christian training institution. It was Christian in name only. For the next years his faith came under constant bombardment where everything he believed about God, Jesus and the Bible was ridiculed, mocked and undermined. And he thought to himself, how I am I going to make it through? I have this call

and yet I have all these questions...

So what he did was he had heard about a faithful, Spirit-filled, Bible believing pastor in the same denomination and sought him out. He said can I please meet with you every week to work through what I facing and pray. And the pastor said, yes.

And not did he come through with faith intact, he thrived in pastoral ministry.

Over the years I've had a mentor.

What about small groups?

A band of brothers (sisters).

So as we head into 2026, this is an encouragement and a reminder.

Your faith is precious. Precious to God.

God is for you.

So is there some way you need to bolster your faith this year.