

Faith in the Press

Marcus James

- **Start with singing “Praise the name of Jesus/I love you, Lord today”**
- **Give greetings, acknowledgements – God, wife (family), Pastor....**

There is a scripture that I am sure we are all familiar with and can quote without thinking. To have a little crowd participation and to set the stage a bit...let's see how well we know the Bible...finish the scripture if you know it...”We walk by faith”.....(the crowd says, ”and not by sight”)

Tonight... I did not walk up to this platform to entertain you. I did not come to impress you with polished words or pretty preaching.

I did not come to pet your flesh... or stroke your comfort... or tickle ears that only want motivation but not transformation. I did not come to give you an emotional rush that feels powerful in here...and dies in the parking lot.

I came with an assignment. I came to confront every **demonic lie** that has been whispered to you about what faith is supposed to look like.

Every fairy tale version of Christianity that told you faith only works when the lights are on... when the money is right... when the diagnosis is good... when the doors are open.

Tonight we are coming into agreement with the Word of God, and we are settling something in this room.

Faith is not a feeling.

Faith is not an atmosphere.

Faith is not a church service.

Faith is your identity.

And if your faith disappears in the wilderness...but suddenly reappears when you step into the promised land...then it was never your identity, faith was your environment.

The mandate I have from God tonight, is not about building emotional believers ***the church has plenty already***. It's about building people whose faith survives the wilderness.

Because if it can't live in the desert...it was never real in the garden.

So, tonight's message is entitled... **Faith in the Press**

(Let me Pray....)

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Church I want us to divorce the thought of modern faith. The faith that says, “I believe something is true.” I want us to take on the truth surrounding Biblical faith, which isn’t passive faith. It’s not wishful thinking. It’s not crossing your fingers and hoping God comes through.

Biblical faith is an active, aggressive trust in the character of God that produces obedience — even when your eyes can’t see a single piece of evidence.

If I could say it plainly:

Faith is living like God is telling the truth — before you have proof that He is.

Faith doesn’t wait for sight.

Faith doesn’t wait for confirmation.

Faith moves because God spoke.

And here’s where many of us — and I’ll put myself right in this — get tripped up.

God speaks something about our future.

He declares promise.

He releases destiny.

He whispers calling.

And then we turn around... and measure what He said against what we see.

We look at our bank account.

We look at our family situation.

We look at our weaknesses.

We look at the delay.

We look at the opposition.

And suddenly what’s visible becomes louder than what was spoken.

But hear me — sight was never meant to be your measuring stick. **The Word was!**

Some of us are trying to drag God’s power down to the level of our current perspective.

But faith doesn’t reduce God to our circumstance.

Faith elevates us to His declaration.

We have to stop trying to shrink His power to match our doubt...and start stretching our faith to match His promise.

And YES, I know that we serve a God who is in the business of giving instructions that do not make sense, but please hear me, that is the point of faith....**(we walk by....)**

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Because when God speaks, no matter how far fetched it may sound to us, **the responsibility of fulfillment is on Him —but the responsibility of trust is on us.**

...Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not until your **OWN** understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He **WILL** direct your path.

St. Augustine once wrote, and I quote:

“Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.”

So, what he is saying is this: **Faith comes BEFORE clarity.**

We don't wait on evidence to obey God, we trust Him first, and *then* understanding follows. Faith isn't pretending; it's choosing to stand on God's truth even when your eyes, emotions, or circumstances haven't caught up yet. And when you do, God rewards that type of trust by eventually allowing you to *SEE* what you once only *BELIEVED*.

Simply put, faith moves first, sight comes later.

Transitional Statement: **And that sounds good in theory—but faith isn't really tested in theory. It's tested in real life. In real pressure. In real discomfort.**

Which brings us to the tension we all live in...

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to say **YES** to God when life feels good?

When the blessings are flowing.

When the doors are opening.

When the path is smooth.

Yes tends to flow from our lips so effortlessly.

But the real test of faith—not the emotional kind, not the hype kind, not the Sunday-only kind—

The real test comes when the feelings fade and the fire gets hot.

Transition:

So the real question isn't “Do you have faith?”

*The real question is—what happens to your faith when comfort disappears? I believe we all have had or will end up having some “Lord I believe, but help my unbelief” moments. – **Reference Mark 9:17-24***

Brief testimony moment – hernia healing

That's the dividing line between comfort and commitment.

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Because this type of faith—the kind that pleases God—is not formed in comfort, it's formed in discomfort.

It's not proven in the overflow.
It's revealed in the **dry seasons**.

We live in a world where feelings are treated like facts. Where people only move if the emotion agrees.

But in the Kingdom of God, we don't walk by feelings—we **walk by faith**.

And if you're going to follow Jesus long enough, you need to settle this now:

There will be seasons where you don't *feel* Him, but you must still **follow Him**.

So if you're in a dry season...
a confusing season...
a wilderness moment...

You are **not disqualified**. You're in the place where faith comes alive.

You're not being destroyed—you're being **developed**.

And tonight we're going to see why our **commitment must be stronger than our comfort**, and why our **faith must lead our feelings**, not the other way around.

Which leads me to my first point -

POINT 1 – FAITH IS PROVEN WHEN COMFORT IS REMOVED

Key Truth:

Faith that only works in comfort isn't faith—it's convenience.

Scripture gives us example after example of people who chose **faith over feeling and commitment over comfort**. Hebrews 11 is called the “Hall of Faith” by many, because it highlights many of our biblical heroes that endured hard times by faith.

Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac. Nothing about that *felt* right—
but faith obeyed when feelings resisted.

Peter walked on water while his eyes were on Jesus. But the moment fear took over—he started to sink.

Faith held him up.
Feelings pulled him down.

Job lost everything-
Family.
Health.

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Wealth.

Yet still declared:

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”

That’s faith that doesn’t depend on comfort.

Let me tell you the difference:

- Comfort seeks safety.
- Commitment seeks the Savior.

You see, comfort will have you running to anyone and anything that makes you feel safe, but the enemy can use it as a distraction to keep you away from the one who IS your safety. The Bible says, in Proverbs 18:10 "the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are SAFE."

The woman with the issue of blood

pressed through pain, shame, and exhaustion— not because she felt good, but because she had faith to believe if she could just get close enough to Jesus and touch the hem of his garment, the son of God would make her whole.

Daniel chose prayer over safety. Commitment over comfort. Discipline over self-preservation.

The three Hebrew boys refused to bow. Even when the furnace was waiting.

They didn’t say,

“God will deliver us *if...*” They said,

“Even if He doesn’t—we’re still not bowing.”

Paul was beaten, imprisoned, shipwrecked— yet his commitment never wavered.

And he reminds us in Hebrews 11:6:

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

Every person that I just named had one thing in common:

They all experienced **dry seasons**. What this should tell us is that there is no level in God at which you graduate from having your faith tested.

Transition into Point 2:

But when comfort is removed, and we start getting tested, most of us don’t question our feelings— we question the season.

Which leads to a dangerous misunderstanding, and my second point...

POINT 2 – DRY SEASONS ARE NOT PUNISHMENT, THEY ARE PREPARATION

So let me ask you:

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How do *you* respond when you hit a dry season?

Do you automatically assume you sinned?

Do you believe that the struggle means you're outside God's will?

Somehow, we've convinced ourselves that when God is pleased with us, everything should be perfect.

The bank account should be full.
The fridge should be stocked.
The promotion at work should happen.
The family should be thriving.

And yes—sometimes that happens, but not always.

We must understand that being in trouble does not mean you're *in trouble* with God.

Some of you may be asking with your inside voice right now, "WHY DOES GOD USE DRY SEASONS? Are they REALLY necessary?" - YES!

The dry seasons aren't meant to destroy you. They're designed to **develop you.**

I know in these seasons it may feel like God is silent— but Scripture shows us something powerful:

God speaks in the desert.
God meets people in the wilderness.
God shapes faith where emotions don't have leverage.

Let me explain it like this.

Farmers understand something we often forget. Dry seasons are necessary.

- They're ideal for harvesting.
- They allow the land to be prepared.
- They expose what's buried beneath the surface.

Dry seasons expose:

- What we depend on
- What's buried beneath the surface of our hearts
- Whether we're chasing blessing or intimacy

Is there anyone in the room that, like me, can say, we've prayed for rain before (LORD open up the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing, shower down your blessings God) but God's reply was, "You're not ready yet."

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WHY? Because rain without preparation produces nothing.

Too much rain too fast, causes seeds to rot.

And spiritually speaking, too many blessings too soon produce diseases like:

Pride.

Selfishness.

Laziness.

Ungratefulness.

God loves us too much to bless us into ruin.

Transition into Point 3:

*And sometimes the hardest truth to accept is this—
not every dry season is something you walked into.*

Some seasons... you were led into.

POINT 3 — THE SPIRIT SOMETIMES LEADS US INTO THE WILDERNESS

Let me say this clearly and help someone today:

Every desert is not the result of sin.

Some desert experiences are the result of being led by the Spirit.

Mark 1:12–13 tells us
that the Holy Spirit **led Jesus into the wilderness.**

Nothing went wrong. Nothing failed.

In fact—this came right after one of the most powerful moments in the life of Jesus. The wilderness didn't mean God left Him. It meant God was **with Him.**

And in the wilderness,
Jesus didn't use emotions—
He used the **Word.**

That's where we struggle.

Instead of using the WORD as a weapon, we use the WORLD as an escape.

Social media.
Inspirational quotes from influencers.
Ungodly advice.

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Temporary comforts.

Intentional distractions that we mask and title hobbies.

Instead of a **warrior mentality**, we adopt a **worrier mentality**.

What we often treat as isolation, God uses for intimacy. Though it feels like pressure, He is positioning us to hear Him more clearly.

So be encouraged when you start feeling like you're entering a dry season.

Don't just pray, "God get me out of here." Instead pray, "God speak to me here."

Transition into Point 4:

But if there's one place where faith and feelings fully collide—one moment that shows us how this works in real time—it's not the wilderness...it's the press.

POINT 4 — GETHSEMANE REVEALS WHO LEADS: FAITH OR FEELINGS

Now here is a key truth:

Faith does not deny emotion—it just refuses to let emotion decide.

Let's look at one last example. This example really drives this key truth home for us tonight:

Matthew 26:36–39, 42, 44. NLT
(Read from the screen)

Jesus goes to a place called **Gethsemane**.
Now that word matters.

Gethsemane means "**olive press**."
It comes from two Hebrew words:
gat — wine press and *shemanim* — oil.

You see this wasn't just a garden, this was a place of **pressure**.

This is where the weight of what Jesus was about to carry began to press down on Him so heavily that Scripture tells us He developed **hematidrosis**—A condition where, under extreme stress and anguish, a person literally sweats drops of blood.

This wasn't symbolic pressure.
This was real.
This was heavy.
This was crushing.

According to theologian **Dr. Tsvi Sadan**, olive oil is a picture of Jesus.

He says:

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“Like olives that serve their purpose only after being duly processed, so Messiah will only accomplish His purpose after being ground, then pressed, then crushed.”

Jesus felt sorrow.
He felt anguish.
He was deeply distressed.
He was overwhelmed with agony.

And let's be clear— those were **natural feelings**.

The same feelings you and I feel when the weight is heavy.
When the future is unclear.
When obedience costs more than you expected.

Three times Jesus prayed,
“Father, let this cup pass from Me.”

Why?

Because what He **felt** was real.

But here's the turning point.

Even though His feelings were heavy,
His **faith was heavier** and declared this:

“Nevertheless—not My will, but Yours be done.”

In this moment, Jesus placed His faith in the Father, above His emotions. He did not allow this season, the one he was entering, to be mismanaged by the people closest to Him. He didn't mishandle the moment by letting fear shift His faith or discomfort cancel His commitment.

The most revealing and eye-opening truth about Jesus' posture in Gethsemane is that it wasn't just for *Him*—**It was for us.**

Because Gethsemane teaches us this:

When the flesh wants to speak first, faith must step in and muzzle the mouth to the will of your flesh, so the Holy Spirit can **respond** to the will of God.

Because you see, it's one thing to trust God when hardship surprises you. It's another thing to trust Him, like Jesus did his entire life, when you know it's coming.

Jesus surrendered his life and showed us that surrender isn't weakness—it's strength under control and if He trusted the Father in the press...**so can we.**

Closing /Conclusion

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As I bring this to a close, I want to say too often, we wait to *feel* God before we follow God.

But the truth is this:

**Our worship should not be shaped by our feelings.
Our feelings should be shaped by our worship.**

So let this be our declaration:

We won't be ruled by feelings.
We will be led by faith.

We won't seek comfort.
We will walk in commitment.

Even in dry seasons—
we will follow.

Even when it's hard—we will obey.

And in the wilderness, we won't wander—**we will worship.**

ALTAR CALL:

Before we dismiss, I need to ask you something.

Who in this room is walking through a dry season...
and if you're honest, your faith feels like it's slipping?

You're still here.
You still believe.
But the wilderness has been heavy.

The doubt has been louder.
The answers haven't come.
And instead of growing closer to God, your hope feels thinner than it used to.

Listen church, there is no shame in struggling. But there is power in surrendering.

Some of you said "yes" when things were good.
But when pressure came, your confidence got quiet.

Tonight, God isn't rebuking you.
He's inviting you.

If you're tired of letting feelings lead...
If you're tired of doubting in the dry place...
If you want your faith to rise to where His power already is—

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I want you to move. Not because you're weak. But because you're ready to grow.

As you come, you're not saying,
"God, get me out."

You're saying,
"God, build me up."

If that's you—come now and let's pray for faith to rise in the wilderness.