

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-12  
Message: A Sure Faith for All Generations  
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Mom and Dad are lying in bed, watching the lightning flashes coming through the closed curtains, listening to the loud crashes of thunder. One says to the other, "I wonder how long it will take." The reference was not to the storm, because within minutes a young child comes running into the room crying, "I'm scared!" She cuddles up in the security of her parents arms while the storm rages. "It's OK," says Mom, "everything will be OK."

A couple years later this little girl is hesitating to let go of Mom's hand on the first day of school. "It's OK," says Mom, "everything will be OK."

Nine years later the little girl is becoming a young lady. She has to take the step of going to a new high school, new teachers, more students. The night before the first day of school she sits with her Mom and Dad and sheds a few tears while expressing her fear of this big change. "It's OK," says Mom, "everything will be OK."

The story can be repeated for the step of leaving home for university. There is excitement and anticipation, mixed with the fear of uncertainty. There is the excitement mixed with uncertainty while wedding plans are being made. The joy of pregnancy is mixed with the touch of fear of the pain of childbirth and the tremendous responsibility of raising a child. "It's OK," says Mom, "everything will be OK."

Years go by. Mom and Dad age, as do the children. Dad unexpectedly suffers a massive heart attack and is lying in the critical care unit at the hospital. The daughter sits with Mom in the waiting room between the short visits that they can have. "It's OK, Mom," she says, "everything will be OK."

At the funeral, while there are many tears and hugs and few words, she says, "It's OK, Mom, everything will be OK."

A few years later Mom realizes that she is forgetting a lot of things. It's easy to blame it on getting older, but there seems to be more to it. She calls her daughter over to talk and wonders out loud if it might be the early stages of Alzheimer's. How will she cope? Where will she live? How fast will it go? "It's OK, Mom, everything will be OK."

At Mom's funeral some time later, the daughter is crying over the loss of a mother and friend, and her own daughter, now a young lady herself, says, "It's OK, Mom, everything will be OK."

How can we say that it will be OK? What does OK mean? Is fear OK? Is pain OK? Is

uncertainty OK? Is death OK? Is loneliness OK? What is OK? Why is it OK?

There can be a variety of answers, as there are a variety of people. It might be OK because fate takes its course and we will learn to adapt. It might be OK because we have the inner strength to cope and when the going gets tough that inner strength will kick in.

As Christians we can say it's OK because of our faith in God. Is this a blind faith? Is this the desperate hope of deceived people? Is this an empty tradition handed down from parents to children?

Or is this a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true? Is this a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit that, in Christ, my sins are forgiven and I belong to God?

This definition of faith may have been written by some people a long time ago, but what it refers to is something that is from God, for all generations. Consider the references which the apostle Paul makes in this first part of his letter to Timothy:

“I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did...” (v.3). Who is Paul referring to when he talks about his forefathers? Having been raised as a Jew, he is very likely talking about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Christianity is not a new religion, not even in Paul's day. Paul is clearly speaking of the Jewish origins of the Christian faith.

What he believes is what Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, and all the ancestors through the generations also believed. There is continuity in the covenant relationship between God and his people. The forefathers believed in the resurrection; so does Paul. The forefathers looked forward to the coming Messiah; Paul proclaims the same Messiah, who had actually made his appearance.

The original Greek also means that Paul serves with a faith *derived from* his forefathers. His faith is like theirs because it has its roots in their relationship with God.

Paul continues this sense of a historical faith when he reminds Timothy that his faith first lived in his grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice. From other passages that speak about Timothy, we know that his mother was a Jew and his father was a Gentile. Therefore it can be concluded that Timothy's grandmother and mother were both Jews who had come to believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah. The Jewish origin of faith is part of Timothy's own family history.

Paul says, “This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus” (vv. 9-10). It goes as far back as the beginning of time. This faith has its origin in the Creator God, who

promised a Saviour after Adam and Eve fell into sin.

It is a faith that has been passed on from one generation to the next. What is passed on? Not simply a set of facts or a checklist of information. Nor is it simply a set of practices that define faith. It is the knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true. It is the deep-rooted assurance that through Jesus, the Messiah, we are right with God.

It is a faith that we know in our minds. It is faith with content, things we know about God and creation, about sin and salvation and forgiveness, about God's care in this world now and a hope for eternity. This is a faith we know, we have learned, we teach it.

It is a faith we are sure of in our hearts. We experience the comfort and peace of trust in God. We sense his leading and directing in our decisions.

It is the ability to say "It's OK, Mom, everything will be OK." Those are not empty words of hopeful maybe's. They are words of confidence based on a historical faith. It's OK, because God is faithful. It's OK, because sins are paid for. It's OK, because we are forever right with God through Jesus Christ. It's OK, because "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."

Let this faith speak in conversations about fears that people have: fear for the future, fear in facing death, fear over health or finances or economy or environment. We have a faith that helps us in facing these fears. We do not deny the reality of difficulties and troubles, but we are not overwhelmed by fear. Remember that fear is not a new thing. This same faith has helped people face their fears in the past. Faith continues to give us hope and peace.

We have a trust, a faith that is a knowledge and assurance that's been around for a long time, through many generations. Keep living it and sharing it and passing it on. Speak the truth of this faith. Live the trust in your heart as an example for each generation.

Let it be known that this is not just "your thing," or something our church has come up with. This relationship of trust in God has been around for generations, back to the beginning of time. It has a solid foundation and a long history.

This faith is also not just a set of rules or a package of defined beliefs and doctrines. It is a living faith of our forefathers, a faith that lives in mothers and grandmothers, in fathers and grandfathers, in uncles and aunts and teachers and pastors and neighbours.

"I know whom I have believed." A faith for all generations. How is this faith living in you?

Amen.