

Faith Reminder

This week I prayed for something not to happen, yet it did (sort of). In the process it was a reminder of old teaching on faith. I will tell you about it later in this article, but for now I want to talk about faith. We have some old teaching that I think a lot of us have forgotten. Although the teaching was mostly good, some of it was not so good. However, faith is important to God, so it should be important to us. In fact, the Bible tells us that without it, we cannot please God. That is a pretty serious statement.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

What is Faith?

Mention the word “faith” and most people go into freeze mode. Sometimes we just don’t know if we have it or not. We often cry out as the disciples did for God to give us more faith. We can’t see it and we don’t know how to measure it. It is not something we can hold in our hands, even though we wish we could. What exactly is it and how do we get it?

Many of us have memorized this verse and quote it often.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)

But what does that really mean? The New English Translation says it this way:

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.
Hebrews 11:1 (NET)

The New Century Version makes it even more clear.

Faith means being sure of the things we hope for and knowing that something is real even if we do not see it.
Hebrews 11:1 (NCV)

When our spirit is born again it is because we have believed that Jesus truly was sent to earth from heaven to take the penalty for our sins and He rose again to ensure eternal life for us. That takes faith to believe.

The Greek word translated as “faith” means conviction that something you know is true even when you cannot see it. It takes faith even to believe that God is real. It means you know strongly in your inner knower (your spirit) that something is very real even when your physical eyes cannot see it.

When I was young with small children, we moved from one state to another. We didn’t have a lot of money, but we had a house. We listed the house for sale before we moved. My mom and dad checked on the house once in a while. In the mean time we rented out the old place to help make the payments. We were renting in our new place until we could sell the old place and afford to buy again.

The house wasn't selling and we discovered that the realtor was having trouble showing it. This was back in the days before email and cell phones. My mom wrote me a letter and told me that the realtor was afraid to show the house because the renters (two schoolteachers) worked all day and got home late. They had a Doberman Pincher dog just outside each door. They never answered their phones. Mom recommended we stop renting and use any means at our disposal to sell the house.

We had prayed for a cash buyer and a quick sale. I began to pray and ask God what He wanted us to do. I believed God confirmed that He was answering our prayer and we should continue believing that God had it under control. I sat down and wrote my mom a letter in response to hers.

I told my mom even though my physical eyes saw the improbability of the place selling with the renters there, my spiritual eyes told me that the place was already sold. This was a difficult letter to write. Although my mom and dad were believers, the faith stuff was difficult for them. We could pray for something, but that didn't mean we would get it. It was always whether it was God's will or not. That does play a part, but it is not the entire story. More about that later.

Within a couple of weeks, the realtors were able to show the place once and that is all it took. The place sold and the rest is history. We must trust our spiritual senses more than we trust our physical senses. Spiritual senses do not come from the mind. They come from an internal peace that flows from the Spirit of God. We cannot make up faith or just mouth words.

Jesus talked a lot about faith while He walked the earth. Sometimes He marveled at the faith that He saw, and other times He was astounded at the lack of faith or unbelief. He did many miracles and performed many healings from the faith of those who requested the miracle. Other times He did these things by His own faith, while those around Him doubted.

One time the disciples were in a boat, afraid. The waves were high and a storm raged around them. Jesus called out to the storm and told it to be quiet and it responded quickly. It certainly wasn't because of the faith of the disciples.

These men had spent time with Jesus getting to know Him. They had left their old lives behind to follow Him, yet they did not know Him enough to have the faith to believe that they would not perish with Him in the boat. They did not yet completely trust Him with their lives.

We are the same. We trust God, have faith in Him for some things, but other things seem safer in our own hands. We do not yet understand that everything about our lives is important to our loving Father, our families, our jobs, our entertainment, our education. EVERYTHING.

One Key to the Kingdom

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't there more to life than food and more

to the body than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky: They do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you more valuable than they are? And which of you by worrying can add even one hour to his life? Why do you worry about clothing? Think about how the flowers of the field grow; they do not work or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these! And if this is how God clothes the wild grass, which is here today and tomorrow is tossed into the fire to heat the oven, won't he clothe you even more, you people of little faith? So then, don't worry saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the unconverted pursue these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:25-33 (NET)

These verses tell us that God cared about the grass, even though He knew that it would be pulled up and burnt for heat and cooking perhaps even the next day. It was still beautiful in His sight, as were the flowers. God, Himself, clothed, watered and fed them. How much more would He do the same for those He created in His image. If we do not understand that, our faith is weak; it is small. Jesus then brings this insight to the disciples, that this is a key principle of the Kingdom.

If we pursue the King and His Kingdom, then we understand our identity is in Him. He is our inheritance, everything He is and everything He has. Until we fully understand that we will not operate in the faith He intended for us, that of being able to move mountains.

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Romans 12:3 (NKJV)

Paul wrote this to the saints who live in Rome. This verse makes it sound like we can only have so much faith and that the level is determined by God. That can't be true on face value because there should not be any unbelief if God gives everyone a chunk of faith. Does God determine our level of faith?

For those who understand the Father heart of God, they know this is not the correct way to look at this. So, what possibly could Paul be talking about? First, let's address whether God gives faith. There is a deep theological debate on this topic, and although there may be some truth to God giving faith sometimes, that should not be the most important factor. Too many people then put the blame back on God when their prayers are not answered. I believe, more accurately, God leads us into situations where our faith can be increased. Let's take a second look at the verse above.

The word for "measure" in the Greek signifies a vessel used to contain something. I would suggest that Paul is saying that whatever God has called you to, He has provided you with a container large enough to contain all the faith you need to do what He has called you to do. It is not about us, but it is about Him.

In the previous verses of this chapter the subject is about grace and anointing to be what God has called a person to be. It takes a certain faith to believe that you are called to represent Jesus in a certain way, but it boils down to the message of this

chapter, faith is not a stand-alone item that we can wrap our arms around. Instead, it is wrapped up in the depth of our understanding and experience of the Father heart of God. I like the way the message says this.

I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

Romans 12:3 (MSG)

Our faith is not in the level of our faith and what we do, but our faith is in our Father and His goodness. Our faith is in what Father God has said about us being sons and daughters. The more we understand this, the higher our level of faith. When Jesus talked about the flowers and the grass being clothed, He told them they had little faith because they did not yet understand the Father heart of God.

Our faith is in God not in our ability to conjure up faith as though it is some magical wand. It is not something we expect God to give us as a gift and when He doesn't then it is His fault not ours. Faith is something that happens when we spend time getting to know God, not just about Him. It is when we take the time to understand His heart and know His ways. That is what pleases God, and why faith is so important to God.

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." **Luke 17:5 (MEV)**

Jesus had been instructing the disciples through parables and his revelation of them. I am sure they were probably overwhelmed by His teaching, because everything they had been taught was being presented to them with new revelation. They wanted faith to believe all the things He was telling them were going to happen.

Jesus responded to them, not by saying he would grant their request, but that it only took faith as small as a mustard seed to move trees. The problem wasn't the level of their faith, but how well they knew the Messiah.

The Lord said, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."
Luke 17:6 (MEV)

Miracles are not always spiritually related, like healing. Miracles are just God being involved in our ordinary daily life.

In Mark chapter 11, Jesus told a fig tree that it would never again grow fruit. The next day the disciples were astounded that the tree was now dead. Jesus told them that even a mountain would move into the sea, if they only had faith in God.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. **Mark 11:22 (KJV)**

In other words, get to know your heavenly Father enough to understand who He is and what is in His heart. Do not let your heart grow lukewarm. So important was this

that Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail him after he sinned by denying Jesus.

but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. **Luke 22:32 (NET)**

We so often let our failures dictate whether we receive answers to our prayers or not. If we do not feel good enough, or feel we have not done enough for God in order to get His attention, we don't believe God will answer our prayers. Jesus prayed that Peter's failures would not hinder his faith in his Heavenly Father's love for him. It must not hinder us, either. Yes, we repent and change our ways in regards to sin, but we run to God not away from Him.

Does a good natural father desert a child and turn His back on him when he does something wrong? No. He encourages them to recognize what they have done, but know that He still loves them and provides for them. How much more does your Heavenly Father love and care for you.

It is interesting that the word faith occurs over and over in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but not in John. John, the beloved, had already come to know God as love. He was called the beloved disciple. With love comes faith. Without love, one cannot totally relate to faith. You have to trust someone to have faith in them, and it is harder to trust someone when there is less than love in the relationship.

My Reminder From God

Now, let's go back to the incident mentioned in the beginning of this article that started this whole topic on faith.

My daughter and son-in-law left on a trip out of state for a few days. I prayed and believed for safe travel for them and no harm would come to them or their vehicle and belongings. On the way home, a pickup attempting to pass them, clipped the rear end. The kids had a bike rack on the back of their vehicle. My son-in-law was able to keep the vehicle under control (angels helped, I believe). The bike rack was damaged and a small amount of damage to the vehicle.

I was extremely thankful that neither my daughter or son-in-law were injured, but I had prayed and believed that God would protect all. Any time something happens different than what we prayed for, we are tempted to not trust God anymore or not trust ourselves to know what faith really is. Therefore, if we allow the doubts to affect us, we won't pray with boldness anymore.

I wanted to know what happened here and why the prayers were not completely answered. The insurance from the other driver is going to pay for a new bike rack and any damage to the vehicle, so what is the big deal? The big deal is I know my Father and I believe what He says. I wanted to know why. It is okay to ask God questions and He will give you an answer, not always the answer you want to hear.

God responded to my question by reminding me of an incident that had happened over 40 years ago. We were living in Minnesota and my husband worked with leather.

He made purses, belts, all kinds of things. He really wanted a leather sewing machine. We began to pray and to save money to buy one. We did not make a lot of money in those days.

One day we noticed an auction to be held in a few weeks where a leather sewing machine was on the list. We had saved a measly \$300 towards a sewing machine. Used ones usually go for much more. We went to the auction believing we would get that sewing machine. The bid went up quickly and landed on \$300 when it suddenly ended with my husband the high bidder. One guy that my husband knew was bidding against him, but he knew how much my husband wanted that sewing machine so he stopped bidding at that point. He did not know that \$300 was to be our highest bid (Miracle # 1).

We got the leather sewing machine tied to a snowmobile trailer we borrowed from my husband's uncle and we started for home about 15 miles away. We were barely on the highway when the railing on the trailer came loose and the sewing machine went flying. There were parts laying all over the highway. (Miracle # 2-explained later)

My husband was devastated, heartbroken. My heart knew God and I knew He was not cruel. He would not give us a dream answered for the exact amount we could pay, only to steal it from us in a moment of time. So once again, I told God I am not looking at this with physical eyes. I am looking at it with spiritual eyes and I know You have it under control.

We picked up all the pieces on the highway and went home. The next morning my husband went down to a local shop that had leather machines and asked them who did maintenance on them and repaired them. He was informed they contracted with someone out-of-state to do this and they only came once a year. They were due to be there in a week or two. (Miracle #3 – perfect timing)

My husband had left his name and phone number with the owner and asked him to have the contractor call him when he came. When the contractor came to the shop, he did the work there and loaded up and left. The owner looked down and saw the note from my husband and went running down the street to give it to the contractor (Miracle # 4)

The contractor called us and came out to look at our machine which was laying in a pile of pieces. When the contractor looked at the machine, which by the way, we had never proved that it worked in the first place, he realized it was a model that his dad had invented himself and had manufactured. He wanted it for that fact alone. In exchange for those pieces and \$150 more that we had managed to save since the time of the auction, he gave us a \$1500 machine that worked! (Miracle #5)

Had we given up and not believed in the goodness of God, I doubt if all these miracle pieces would have fallen in line. Our God is pleased with our faith in His love and goodness and that we desire to know and understand His heart.

In all of this, God did not tell me why my prayer for my daughter and son-in-law was not answered exactly as I had prayed. Instead, He reminded me of His goodness and His love. It could have been because of conditions ahead at a certain time would have

harmed them or many other reasons. I do not know. What He reminded me of was that He was trustworthy and even though things don't always happen exactly like we expect, God honors our faith in His goodness and love and always does what is best for us.

He reminded me (and now I remind you), our faith is not in our ability to pray, or our ability to muster up enough faith to get an answer. Our faith develops by the level that we understand His love for us and His goodness. Our capacity for faith is the fullness of Him. That only comes from spending time with Him and getting to know His heart. We just need to spend more quality time with Him, rather than just obtaining knowledge about Him.

We don't always need to know everything God is doing or why. When we trust in His goodness and know His heart, we know everything He does is for our good. I am perfectly fine with Him tweaking the outcome of my prayers, because I trust Him. The advancement of the Kingdom of God on earth depends on a people who understand their true identity as sons and daughters of God and understand the true nature of faith. They know their God, not just know about Him.

Daniel chapter 11 describes a time like ours where everything around us was in chaos. Deception was everywhere and everything was being destroyed. People were losing faith. But there was a group of people untouched by all of this. They were strong and could overcome. We need the same in our world today. All it takes is truly KNOWING GOD. Knowing God and His heart leads to trust and faith to do anything.

The king of the North will tell lies to God's people. Those who have not obeyed God will be ruined. But there will be some who know God and obey him. They will be strong and fight back.
Daniel 11:32 (ICB)

