

FAITH IN ACTION
It is time to trust the Lord!

2023

From the time God created man and woman, He has always been calling a people that will love Him, entrust their lives completely to Him, and serve Him with all their hearts. In the Old Testament we read many stories of great men and women who loved God, lived by faith, and were determined to follow His leading for their lives. And despite the many obstacles and challenges they faced, they accomplished amazing missions in His name.

The author of the Book of Hebrews writes about them, but first explains what faith is. “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.”¹ And to convey the importance of responding to God in faith, he continues saying, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”²

He then begins to list a few names taken from what is today called, the “Hall of Faith”, along with a brief explanation on how those people exercised faith. He writes about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Rahab.³ Obviously, just like us, every one of them was not perfect. Many experienced great failures, and some had serious, ongoing character flaws. However, they came to a turning point where they chose to trust God rather than go back to what they could see; that which was safe and comfortable, and appeared to be the easy way. And in his call for all believers to be inspired by them, the author continues...

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.”⁴

And he goes on to say, “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”⁵ In other words, although many of them experienced a great deliverance of some sort, they never witnessed the coming of the Messiah as foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the promises of an end to sin and death, the creation of new heavens and a new earth, a city with eternal foundations designed and built by God still remain to be fulfilled. So, even those who experienced victories did not receive their full inheritance. “They all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”⁶ They and those saved by grace alone through faith in Christ have this in common: the greatest of rewards will be given to those who walk in faith. That’s why their example is so relevant to us. The humbling, awesome truth is that God has granted us, those who are alive and hearing the gospel today, an even clearer presentation of the truth. Therefore, we’re able to better comprehend, believe, and join in that ultimate reward.

In the New Testament, we also find many believers who loved God, lived by faith and served Him, including Jesus' twelve disciples. The majority of them were fishermen by trade. Oh, they were not perfect either, but Jesus knew their hearts, and patiently taught them how to become “fishers of men”. Without

question, their lives had significantly changed, and there were times when their lack of faith in Jesus was evident. At some point, Jesus began a conversation with them and asked, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Then, Jesus got to the core of the matter. "But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?" Thankfully, Simon Peter boldly rose up and said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven."⁷ What an amazing moment it must have been for those men! And I can only imagine how they must have felt being in the presence of the Son of God incarnate!

For three years, they lived with Jesus and followed Him everywhere He went, while He preached and taught about the kingdom of God. They saw the numerous miracles He performed that proved His deity; that He is, in fact, the way, the truth and the life, and that no one can come to the Father except through Him. They witnessed His love, mercy, and compassion towards those in need, and there were so many of them... They felt fear and deep sorrow at Jesus' crucifixion, but an overwhelming joy followed when He appeared to them after His resurrection. And as Jesus' earthly ministry came to a close, the disciples gathered around Him for the final time. We now see them in this incredible scene...

"They asked Him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."⁸ And the rest is history... Ultimately, all of the faithful disciples, except for John, who was exiled on the Island of Patmos, died as martyrs.

Jesus is now asking each and every one of us: "Who do you say I am?" As true born-again believers, Jesus wants us to walk by faith. He calls for a body of faithful believers who will commit themselves wholly to His keeping, love Him and serve Him with all their hearts. However, how many times have we experienced God performing an amazing work for us, and we said that we will never doubt Him again? And how quickly did we forget about it when our next trial arose? Oh, we like to think we trust God and that our faith is unshakable. Yet, most of us have seasons of unbelief, times when things happen beyond our comprehension, and we feel overwhelmed. Our prayers go unanswered for months, perhaps even years, and we give up our hope that God will ever do anything on our behalf. I remember a time in my walk with God when I felt this way...

Several years ago, our family of five faced a financial crisis that was unlike anything we had ever experienced before. We had lost everything and despite our best efforts, we were unable to resolve our issues unless God intervened. Personally speaking, the various challenges we encountered were more than I could handle. My faith weakened to the point that I got mad at God, which resulted in a rebuke from Him. I realized then that despite the fact that we were financially broke, He had always provided for our basic needs in one way or another. In fact, during those most stressful times of our lives, I witnessed what I like to call "miracles", and I had no reason to behave that way. So, I sincerely asked God for His forgiveness... He had always been present during the two years of intense struggles, and the eight years we've had to endure the consequences of it all. This adversity taught us a valuable lesson: He alone is trustworthy in all He promises, and faithful in all He does. He is a loving, merciful and compassionate Father who never abandons His children.

How about you, dear reader? Are your finances a mess? Perhaps there's sickness in your home or trouble in your workplace? Are your personal relationships in shambles? Do you need guidance and direction because it's confusion in your life, and you desperately search for a word from God to know His will for you? Do you struggle with either physical or emotional issues? Are you worried, discouraged, and

hopeless? Then, it's time to trust the Lord! His sacrificial life and death provide ample reason to trust Him even when we don't understand His ways. He calls us to come to Him just as we are, with all our weaknesses. Then, through the leading of His Holy Spirit, He empowers us to follow Him.

As believers, it is important to recognize that God can accomplish anything, but always in accordance with His intended plan for us, in pursuit of our greatest good, and for His glory. He has our best interests at heart. He'll make all things right for us in His time. He cares about us because we belong to Him and He loves us. We are His children. He is concerned about our circumstances, and He is not going to let us down. And that's why the Bible says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."⁹

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."¹⁰ This rest that the Bible talks about is a supreme confidence in God, a trust so sure and complete that it ends all fear, worry and anxiety. How do we acquire this unwavering faith, and kind of trust in God? Most importantly, we surrender our lives to Christ; we let His Word fill our minds, direct our wills, and transform our affections; we develop and maintain a constant close relationship with Him through prayer; we attend a church where the true Word of God is taught and preached; we fellowship with other believers and encourage one another to persevere in our walk of faith. As we do this, the eyes of our hearts will be enlightened, and our minds will be renewed. The Bible says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- His good, pleasing and perfect will."¹¹ Therefore, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."¹²

You know, God never promised us a clear blue sky without clouds, sun without rain, joy without sorrow, and peace without pain on this earth. But He promised us strength for the day, and rest for the weary heart; light on the way, and grace for each trial; help from above, unfailing sympathy, and undying love. We must never lose sight of the better country God promised us: a heavenly one. We're just travelers on this earth, and as long as we're here, the enemy of our souls will always try to destroy our faith and trust in God. For how long? Only God knows, but compared to eternity, it's a very short time...

And looking back one more time to the Book of Hebrews, the author once again inspires and encourages us to keep fighting the good fight of faith. He said, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."¹³

In the end, however, it's up to each of us to decide whether we want to live with complete faith and trust in God or surrender to the enemy. So, what will it be?

With love,

Beth ☺

¹Hebrews 11:1-2 ²Hebrews 11:6 ³Hebrews 11:4-12 & 17-31 ⁴Hebrews 11:32-38 ⁵Hebrews 11:39-40 ⁶Hebrews 11:13 ⁷Matthew 16:13-17
⁸Acts 1:6-11 ⁹Proverbs 3:5-6 ¹⁰Matthew 11:28-30 ¹¹Romans 12:2 ¹²Philippians 4:6-7 ¹³Hebrews 12:1-3