

“Why Faith: Faith is Critical” –‘The Power of Faith’

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Without faith, it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. – Hebrews 11:6 (NRSV)

I remember stumbling onto this verse. It was as though it had suddenly appeared in the classic chapter on faith. As a child, I had been drilled on the chapter’s first verse: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” For years, I never quite understood this verse. I just had to memorize it. When I got older, I read this verse in the NIV translation: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” That made a little more sense, but I still had some struggle with understanding the verse.

Not until I read Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” did the whole idea about faith get my attention.

Having faith doesn’t mean that things are always going to go your way. Having faith, though, means that you have the inner strength and desire to go on, no matter what.

You see what you cannot see. You see what others cannot see or even perceive.

That sight gives an energy that is inexplicable yet powerful. It gives courage that others cannot understand. Sight makes one able to tread water when life’s difficulties seem overwhelming.

That’s what the author of Hebrews said: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” The whole of this chapter makes sense if we understand that one point.

Having faith means that we see with different eyes – not human eyes. Human eyes have finite capacity but eyes of faith are infinite. Eyes of faith see something bigger than life, against all odds and prevailing opinions.

There was a woman who was very ill with complications from diabetes. She had been apparently fine one day and then the next day she fell critically ill to the point of death. She was in a coma and her vital signs were consistently getting worse. She was put on life support. Some of her children thought that she should be taken off life support and allowed to die peacefully. One of her children kept saying, NO. She will be all right. God has told me she will be all right. Her siblings scoffed and cast her aside as a hopeless religious romantic, but she held her ground.

Days passed. The woman appeared to be getting worse. Even the doctors were antsy for this case to go one way or the other. The daughter held fast because she could see what nobody else could.

After three agonizing weeks, something happened. The woman awakened. She was taken off life support and began talking. She had been in the grip of death and now she was awake, talking and wanting to eat. Her condition improved daily and after about ten additional days she was released to go home.

The lone child merely said, 'I knew it.' I could see mom walking around. CRAZY FAITH.

Faith is not hoping beyond hope. Faith is knowing the One in whom you trust and moving and acting in a way that says you know. There is an assurance that what one knows will come to be. One doesn't know how it will come to be. One just knows that it will be. That knowledge also inspires one to work toward what is 'seen.' Faith is not sitting and waiting. It is moving toward the unseen; it is working and planning for what you see and know.

Consider Moses. He could see deliverance and the promise land. Although that land wasn't physically in his view as he trudged through the wilderness, he knew it existed because God had told him so. Remember Noah. He could see a

massive flood. What about Jesus? He could see salvation for God's people. What people saw wasn't there yet but spiritually it was as good as done. That inner 'sight' serves as a driver for their actions.

Moses and Noah actually saw what they knew would be. They lived long enough to witness the power of faith inspired living. Jesus died before he could see what God was going to do and how which brings us back to Hebrews 11. In Hebrews, the writer carefully lists people who lived by faith such as Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham and says, 'All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance (Hebrews 11:13). The writer goes on, mentioning Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses, the crossing of the Red Sea, the destruction of the walls of Jericho and the work of Rahab (Hebrews 11:17-31).

It's as if the writer of Hebrews has grown excited with his own recollections of what had been accomplished because of great faith: 'What more shall I say?' (Hebrews 11:32). There were too many details. Their works were both courageous and incredible, beyond the scope of human understanding and vision. Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice and obtained promises; they shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of flames and escaped the edges of the sword (Hebrews 11:33-34). The testimony is impressive. Through faith people became powerful in battle; women received back their dead raised to life again while others were tortured, mocked and flogged (Hebrews 11:35-36). Surely, one would think, all these actions would result in them seeing and tasting the end result, the victory for which they suffered and believed. The author says at the end of the chapter, 'These were all commended for their faith yet none of them received what was promised' (Hebrews 11:39).

If that's the case, one might ask, 'Do I really want to have faith? How could God allow an outcome that doesn't honor our hard work and frankly, our FAITH?

That's the crux of the problem. We may not like it, but having faith doesn't mean that things are necessary going to go our way.

Having faith means that we have the energy to push us forward toward something bigger and better than ourselves. Having faith means that we trust God to be God, whatever that looks like and however it is manifested. Having faith means that we expect God to be God just like we expect an elevator to lift us to the 100 floor or an airplane to lift us to 3300 feet. Having faith means we understand that expecting God to be God also means we understand that God's ways are not our ways. We understand that God being God is completely out of our control.

We cannot have faith unless we dare to trust God. In order to trust God we have to rein in our desire to box God in or dissect the divine personality into bite size morsels. God is so big. What God does and how God does it are beyond human comprehension.

Trusting God is not risky because God is a sure thing. Now, God 'being a sure thing' doesn't mean that bad things can't happen to us, it simply means that God is always available whenever we call.

Having this kind of faith truly does motivate and give hope. When we identify God as an 'always there' God, our attitude about God begins to change. We grow from a childlike faith into a mature faith. Knowing that God is an 'always there' God give us a sense of confidence even in our darkest moments. That is the relationship we should have with the God who promised 'never to leave us' (Deuteronomy 31:6; John 14:18; Hebrews 13:5).

Even worshiping God doesn't mean that there will not be 'wilderness moments' or even 'wilderness years' when it seems that we cannot find our way. Faith in these instances will keep us sane, focused and comforted in spite of dire circumstances. Scripture says that when we search for God with all our heart and soul, we will find God (Deuteronomy 4:29). Faith means that we understand this and know it to be true.

Without faith, it's impossible to please God, and we, because we love God, want to please God.

Having faith give us the ability to hold on and see what cannot be seen in the most impossible of situations. We can tread water; we can survive and emerge from tough circumstances less bruised than if we enter those circumstances without faith.

Faith acts as a kind of spiritual endorphin, giving energy that is healing and empowering. Faith takes away the fatigue of fighting life's daily battles and gives us strength for the journey.

Faith exist for us, not for God. It's like when my parents used to tell me, 'I've already learned that lesson; you have yet to learn it! We have to choose to trust God, choose to believe in God, and finally, choose to know God. It is in the knowing God that faith is born and in that birth comes new life for the believer.

When we have difficulties, sometimes our faith falters and we get unsteady in our relationship with God. During those times it's hard to believe that nothing is impossible for God. It's hard to have faith in the midst of a storm. Storms do come and uproot our lives so how do you cope and find strength? People of faith must believe, no matter how crazy and improbable, that their faith will be sustained and rewarded. So when the next crisis hits – and it will – try believing in the impossible, try standing on God's promises and wait to see what God does.

Faith – moves the hand of God – 'thy faith hath made thee whole'

Faith – moves mountains – 'if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed'

Faith – strengthen when weak – 'I know in whom I have believe and I am persuaded...'

Faith – produces courage; Faith produces energy; Faith gives assurance; Faith gives confidence;

Standing on the promises that cannot fail, When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail, By the living word of God I shall prevail, Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises I cannot fail. Listening every moment to the Spirit's call. Resting in my Savior as my all in all, Standing on the promises of God.