

“Your Faith Has Made You Well”

Christianity is a community of faith. "Do you have faith or not?" we either ask ourselves or are asked by others. "Is your faith great or small?" It is nearly impossible to answer such questions objectively, and frankly when others asked me such questions, it could be annoying.

If a stranger were to ask you, "In one sentence, what is faith?" isn't it difficult to come up with an answer? What exactly is faith, and how would you respond to that question? To help us grasp and analyze the concept of faith, the Bible introduces people whose incidents shaped and molded their faith. Moreover, the concept of faith is revealed to us through our own personal experiences with our beliefs, and those experiences become our living knowledge and practical definition of faith.

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 11:1 that "faith guarantees that all that we hope for will actually happen, and it gives us confirmation about things we cannot see." Sir William Osler, one of the founders of John Hopkins Hospital and known as the "Father of Modern Medicine, said, "If there is no faith, people cannot do anything. But everything is possible when people have faith."

Let me illuminate three points about faith illustrated in today's scriptures.

I. The Starting Point of Our Faith is in God

Frequently, we try to create faith in God ourselves, under our own control. People think and say, "I believe God," in order to produce faith, but in fact, it is God alone that gives us faith. Without the faithfulness of God, could we have faith in Him?

If God didn't desire us to have faith in Him, would we have any faith? As mortal beings who are lacking in every way, people experience despair when they try to produce faith by themselves. This is because we humans innately possess a sinful nature that makes us fear becoming close to God. When we try to have faith in God merely using our own weak will, we easily stumble and fail.

My father lived for 39 years with me on this earth. During that time, he never specifically taught me that he was my father. Also, I never asked him whether he was my real father. We never took a DNA test or went on the Maury Povich talk show to know whether my father really was my biological father.

Nonetheless, he had always been my father, and I was always his son. That faith always existed between us. How is that possible? Because throughout his life and his actions towards me, my father displayed the truth that he was my father and I was his son. He produced my faith in him.

In the New Testament, the Greek word “Pistis” was used for the word “faith”. The exact meaning of “pistis” is “to listen to the promise of God, understand the promise, and have total conviction that the promise will be achieved.” The important emphasis in this concept of faith is not to have conviction for what “I” hope for or long to possess. Rather, faith is to understand the definite promise that God has given to us.

II. Faith Transcends Morals and Ethics

The second point I want to share with you is that faith transcends ethical and moral standards. While examining my own faith experiences as well as those of others, I observed a shortfall in the concept of faith: While many claim to live by faith, in reality, they live and rely on common sense.

Of course, as believers in Christ, our faith leads us to live virtuously as moral and ethical people. Additionally, the Christian faith combines well with what is moral and ethical in the world. However, we need to know that when God wants to reveal His true will, sometimes the harmony between faith and worldly morals and ethics is broken.

For example, let’s look at the conversation between Elijah and the woman of Zarephath. Elijah ordered this woman, who was almost dying of starvation, to give him the bread first. Obviously, Elijah did not know the saying, “Ladies first.” Joking aside, this is not something that a moral and ethical person would do! But, the woman recognized Elijah as a prophet of God at first sight. In verse 12, the scripture says, “By the living Lord your God, I swear...”

In this situation, both Elijah and the woman are following standard morals or ethics. Morally, in this situation, it would have been right for Elijah to sell any possessions he had in order to buy some bread and meet this starving woman. From a Christian ethical viewpoint, it is fully acceptable that Elijah does such a thing. Yet on the contrary, how is it that a fine, strong man such as Elijah asks a feeble, starving woman to give him her bread, even after she specifically tells him that that is the last remaining portion?

Why does this story proceed in this manner? The main point of this story is to show God's might and faithfulness to both Elijah and the woman. This is the God who closed up the sky and stopped the rain. He dried up the stream.

There was only enough bread for the woman and her son to eat their final meal before they died of hunger. However, miraculously, three people shared and ate from that portion of bread, with enough food that no one starved. This bread did not last for only one meal, but over the course of many days.

"For many days" here in the Bible is interpreted to mean around two years! Elijah told the woman God's message in accordance with God's order to him. Today's scripture confirms that God's plan, not human morality and ethics, was achieved exactly as He instructed.

III. Our Faith Gives Great Joy to Our Lord

The final point that I want to share is to remember that our faith gives great pleasure to God. We as human beings do not have any other greater rewarding than giving pleasure to God. We cannot do that without faith. Or conversely, we *can* do it with faith. Hebrew 11:6 says, "No one can please God without faith, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek him."

God wants and desires to give the prize to those who seek and believe in Him. Ironically, people do not long for God and therefore cannot receive the prize. Isn't this such a miserable existence?

Why can't we have a firm faith in God? Because we are satisfied with the worldly things we have. Also, because we do not know God. And additionally, because we don't know the prize that God wants to give us. The root problem is that we are not very concerned about the prize that God wants to give us.

Would God want to give us a prize that we do not need? If God were to give us the prize, wouldn't He prepare one that was truly necessary? God does not demand a sequence of qualifying conditions in order to receive the prize, unlike other things in life.

Therefore, those who have a vision of God's prize will be given it. Those who have faith in God's promise will attain the eternal prize, which the world cannot give. You will not only gain the prize, but also live a life of power and ability through your faith.

In 1981, a certain Mr. Y visited his homeland of Korea, two years after his immigration to the United States. The primary purpose of his visit was to see his family. However, at that point in his life, it seemed like the right time to get married and settle down. Mr. Y thought that he was quite the catch. Fortunately, an older lady who was a former church member of Mr. Y's called his parents and asked to arrange Mr. Y with a certain Ms. L, who was the daughter of her church best friend.

One night, Mr. Y attended a Wednesday evening church service with the hopes of seeing Ms. L. Yes, it was a little creepy. Mr. Y caught a glimpse of Ms. L sitting in the backchurch pew. Mr. Y asked God what He thought of Ms. L, but God did not respond back to him. However, Mr. Y was convinced that God would connect him with a faithful woman. He told his parents that he would meet Ms. L.

The next day, Ms. L, Mr. Y, their parents, and the matchmaker all met together at a restaurant. To say the least, it was a very awkward first date. 15 days after their first meeting, they were engaged, and 7 days after their engagement, they got married.

How happy they must have been! Of course, they were so happy. However, they experienced as much pain as happiness. After the whirlwind courtship, there was so much they didn't know about each other, and there were so many differences between them: differences in personality, family background, and way of thinking.

Every time they struggled, they wanted to tell God, "Lord, this person is not the one." Instead, however, they rather confessed, "Lord, I believe and have faith that this is the best person you have chosen for me." Because they held onto that faith in God, they were able to pass over those many difficult nights. Now, Mr. and Mrs. Y have celebrated 41 years of marriage together.

After their marriage, their faith grew stronger and stronger, and their love grew deeper and deeper. They were not very familiar with what love was at the beginning of their marriage, but they endured the pain because they held firmly to their faith. Even today, they confess that they continue to learn true love through faith. Those two people are here today: Pastor Son and his wife, Euni! Amen.

Reflect and Apply for Today's Sermon:

1. Among the Bible characters, who is the person of faith you most aspire to be like? What about him fascinates you?
2. What is the Bible scripture on "faith" that you should always remember in order to have genuine faith in God? Can you memorize the verse?
- 3) What Christian and spiritual practices do you follow in prayer, the Word, and good acts to keep your faith strong? What practical advantages do they provide you in your life?