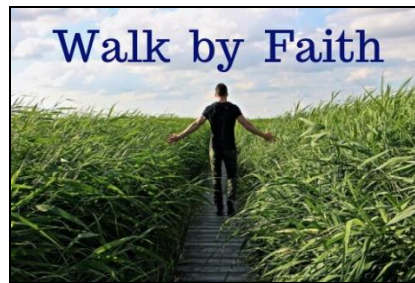


WALK BY FAITH



Scripture:

Psalm 82

¹God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: ²“How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah* ³Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. ⁴Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

⁵They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk around in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

⁶I say, “You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you; ⁷nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, and fall like any prince.”

⁸Rise up, O God, judge the earth; for all the nations belong to you!

Hebrews 11:29-33 and 12:1, 2

²⁹By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. ³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days.

³¹By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

³²And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions.

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,

²looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



This passage inspires questions in me. How about you?

One is: how does faith make water part, walls fall, hide spies, bring forth justice, and how does faith shut the mouths of lions? Sounds like a riddle doesn't it? The answer is: God only knows.

And my second question is: Why do so many people have faith even if they don't get their direct answers to prayer?

It seems trusting in God has a lot to do with faith.

Faith and trust (like peaches and cream) go together to create hope, and those who hope in the

Lord are strong in faith. It is like a circle that goes around and around. Faith and trust go hand in hand with hope.

ISAIAH 40

Like it says in Isaiah 40: "...those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

If you are looking for a passage in the Bible that is inspirational and beautifully written with amazing imagery, read all of Isaiah 40. Verse 11, for example, says, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep."

This passage today reminds us that "by faith," with God's help, we can do amazing things! We should think big not small. Negative forces want us to fret and worry and doubt the power of faith embracing hope and stepping out in life to make an impact on the world. But nothing is impossible with God. So, if you have a gift and talent that you are suppressing because you fear you will fail, God (and Brené Brown) would say, Embrace your imperfections. Acknowledge your vulnerabilities, step forward without shame and go for it anyway! Be the best *you* you can be on behalf of your creator who made you and who sustains you. Like Melania says, "Be best."

TOO MANY EASY EXCUSES

Many people fail before they get started. There are too many easy excuses in our world. "I'm too old to start something new." I'm too tired to make a difference in this world. I'm not smart enough, rich enough, or strong enough. But there are so many things a person can do for others just with email or a phone call, or giving support financially, too, even from a wheelchair.

One of the biggest obstacles to faith is a lack of understanding of what faith really means. Many people think having faith means you have to look a certain way, have a certain lingo, do the right rituals, and wear a cross or other faith symbol around your neck.

THE DEFINITION OF FAITH

Faith is defined as complete trust or confidence in someone or something. The second definition is a strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof. (This must be reflecting Hebrews 11:11; Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.)

Some days your faith may feel weak and other days your faith may feel strong. No matter how you are feeling, God is with you, waiting for you to tap into the spiritual resources he has waiting, to help you "mount up with wings like eagles and run and not be weary."

Faith and perseverance go together. The end of this passage says, "... Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith..."

GET TO KNOW JESUS

So, if Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, then to deepen your faith, I suggest you get to know who Jesus was and is. Knowing who you believe in makes your faith authentic and not fake faith.

Some people call themselves "Christian" (which means Christ follower) but then if you ask them what Jesus said he came to earth to do, they won't have a clue. In John 10:10 Jesus says, "... I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." And a little bit later in John 14:6, he says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." So, those who follow him need to know what "way, what truth and what life" they are following. Otherwise it is blind faith which means a belief without a true understanding of what you believe. The main theme of Christ's ministry was and is love and justice for all. If you aren't working on paving the way so others feel God's love and justice, then don't call yourself a Christian.

PRAYER

I encourage you to go home and make a list of what you believe about Jesus and what faith you have in God for yourself personally. This leads to my second question. Some people believe God answers all prayers if you just pray hard enough. And if you don't get your answer to prayers then you don't have a deep enough faith. But is that what the Bible promises?

This is a heavy question that weighs on the minds of many.

Why do many people have a strong faith in God even if they don't get their direct answers to prayer?

But we probably all know others who try to pray and then give up on God when they think God did not answer them.

DIFFICULTY TRUSTING

When I put on my psychology hat, I remember that people who have difficulty trusting people also have trouble trusting in God. Something may have hurt them when they were younger making the world unpredictable and frightening, even now as adults. Sometimes it is due to a severe trauma they suffered or a disease they are currently battling. They believe God could not be good or would not answer their prayers because they experienced a traumatic event and felt that God abandoned them. Or they could have been taught that God punishes us.

It is not for us to judge. What we are to judge is our own attitude. Are you trusting in God? Do you trust that even if the waters are not parted for you, there is still a Divine force who cares for you?

I CHOOSE TO TRUST

I choose to trust. I choose to walk in faith, even if I stumble sometimes. Even if the road may be dusty and the path may be winding, living life with faith and trust is healthier than living life afraid of others and assuming that God doesn't care.

I love the prose poem Footprints in the Sand. The poem is famous even though the author is anonymous. I believe it touches the heart and strives to answer some of those unanswered prayer questions we have.

**One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord,
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.**

**For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints
in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.
After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of
my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.**

**This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord
about it.**

**"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most
troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why, when I needed You the
most, You would leave me."**

**He whispered, "My precious child, I love you
and will never leave you
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."**

CARRYING EACH OTHER

God put us on earth to carry each other on behalf of Jesus. I am so very grateful for all the cards and messages of sympathy! You all are carrying me right now.

And if you need a sign of hope after the three mass shootings, look at the good news about the husband in El Paso, Antonio Basco. His Margie was killed in the shooting and he had no one to help him commemorate her life. Nine hundred floral arrangements and ten thousand messages arrived and there was standing room only in the church. The newspaper quoted Matthew 14:22: "Faith will get you through anything."

FAITH AND TRUST

Grammy winner Lauren Daigle wrote a song about faith and trust after her grandfather was diagnosed with cancer. She was very close to her grandfather and took a lot of time out of her career to be at his bedside. She said she was so sad that

her prayers for healing were not answered. But later she found a way to be grateful for the time she spent with him towards the end of his life even though she had to halt the work on her new album. Lauren said she was blessed to witness her grandfather talking to family members who had passed before and she said he was certain he was seeing the face of Jesus a few days before he died. So, she wrote this song. (A video was shown to the congregation.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv-SXz_exKE

TRUST IN YOU

By Lauren Daigle

Letting go of every single dream
I lay each one down at Your feet
Every moment of my wandering
Never changes what You see
I try to win this war
I confess, my hands are weary, I need Your rest
Mighty warrior, king of the fight
No matter what I face You're by my side
When You don't move the mountains
I'm needing You to move
When You don't part the waters
I wish I could walk through
When You don't give the answers
As I cry out to You
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You
Truth is, You know what tomorrow brings
There's not a day ahead You have not seen
So let all things be my life and breath
I want what You want Lord and nothing less
When You don't move the mountains
I'm needing You to move
When You don't part the waters
I wish I could walk through
When You...

Benediction

I wish my mother had not lost her ability to speak before she passed. But one day I was still able to tell she was looking forward to heaven.

About three days before she died, she lifted her arms up as if she was being lifted up by someone.

I wasn't sure what to do, so I just reassured her that it was OK, everything was going to be OK. Then another time that same day she did the same thing: looked up to the ceiling and lifted her arms up as if she was on her way up to heaven.

By faith we can trust that God will be there to lift us up when our time comes, too. When you live by faith, you can focus your energies on really living and trusting that you and God and the people of true faith can help you handle anything that comes your way.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen



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