

“REMEMBER YOUR FAITH”
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16, Romans 10:8-13, 2 Timothy 1:3-14
March 5 & 6, 2022

“In a farming community, it hadn’t rained in a long time, and things were getting desperate. The ministers in town decided they were going to call a prayer meeting. They said, ‘Look, we want the whole town to come to the prayer meeting and bring their religious symbols.’ So the whole town showed up for the prayer meeting and people brought crosses, they brought their Bibles, the Catholics brought their rosaries, and they all cried out to God. They finished the prayer meeting. No rain was in sight. They all went home.

“The next day though, in the town square where they had had the meeting, there was a little boy. ‘Oh, God, we need rain. God, show Your power, and give us rain.’ The day before, with all the preachers and all the people with all their religious symbols, calling on God, no rain. The little boy shows up the next day by himself in the town square, and as he was praying, the sky got darker. As he was praying, rumbling occurred. As he was praying, the shower hit, and it was pouring down rain.

“What was it about this little boy? He said the same things that all the people said the day before. The day before they had all the preachers, they had all the ministers; they even brought their religious symbols. But the day the young boy came, when the clouds got dark, he lifted up the symbol that he brought: an umbrella. He expected it to rain.

“When you anticipate rain, you take an umbrella. When a forecaster tells you it’s going to rain, when a meteorologist says it’s going to storm today, most people will get their umbrellas because they believe the forecast. Meteorologists are wrong half the time and we still take them at their word. **Why is it, when it comes to God, who is never wrong, we hesitate to believe and act on His Word?”¹**

Hebrews 11:1 gives us a great definition of faith. “...*faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*” The little boy’s faith was demonstrated in his bringing an umbrella with him to the town square when he prayed. He didn’t see any clouds when he began to pray; he didn’t hear

¹ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 989, #279)

the thunder as he made his way to the middle of the town; he didn't feel rain drops falling on his head as he lifted up his prayer request before the Lord. But this young man came prepared for the rain that he was certain was going to happen because he had faith in the Lord God who can do anything. His actions demonstrated his certainty that the Lord would hear his prayer and answer him. That's faith.

As Hebrews 11 continues to share the faithfulness of individuals of the Old Testament, we hear of how they all put their confidence in the promises of God and lived expecting them to happen any day. Verse 13 tells us, "*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...*" Does that mean that their faith was useless? Does it mean that the One they put their faith in was unable to deliver what they had been promised? Does it mean that God is unreliable and a poor One to put our faith in? NO! On all three counts, No! **We put our faith in a God who can and does answer prayer for our good.**

Verse 39 & 40 explain; "*These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*" God knows the plans he has for us, plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give us a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11). Though we may not receive the things that God promises, that does not mean that He is stingy on His fulfillment, or incapable of supplying us with them. No, God is ready and willing to give us a better thing that may come to fulfillment after this life is finished. **Faith is the confidence that God will indeed fulfill His promises at just the right time, in His timing, for just the right reason** so that we might rejoice in Him as we trust in Him. Faith is believing every day that God knows the very best for us, and is ready to supply us with it, at just the right time. But we must continue to trust Him and be patient to let His purpose and His plan become completed.

The little boy's prayers were answered immediately in the opening story in order to show the rest of the community that it is not because of great numbers of people that God answers prayer. It is not because of the religious symbols that God answers prayer. It is not even because of religious leaders calling out to God that He answers prayers. God answers prayers to those who are faithful, "*sure of*

what they hope for, and certain of what they do not see” (Heb. 11:1). The little boy’s faith was the example to the people of the town of the power and majesty of God. **And it demonstrated the power of one faithful person’s prayer making a difference, because he came prepared for the answer.**

Psalm 91 assures us of God’s love for those who put their trust and faith in Him. *“God says, ‘I will save those who love me and will protect those who acknowledge me as Lord. When they call to me, I will answer them; when they are in trouble, I will be with them. I will rescue them and honor them. I will reward them with long life; I will save them”* (91:14-16). Does that mean that we will never face struggles or hardships? No, it means that God will be with us during that time so that we might be encouraged by His presence with us. Does it mean that our lives will never be in danger? No, it means that God will protect us and guide us into safe places and keep evil at bay from us. Does it mean that life will always be worry free and rosy? No, it means that when we are faced with difficulties and challenges, when we have faith in the Lord God Almighty, He will save us, either physically or spiritually or both.

And that is the message from the Apostle Paul, found in Romans 10. He tells us, *“If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised Him from death, you will be saved. For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved. The Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.’ This includes everyone... ‘Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved’”* (Rom. 10:9-12a, 13).

And again in Scripture (Hebrews 11:6) we are told, *“No one can please God without faith, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek Him.”* It is impossible to do the work of the Lord without having faith in the Lord Jesus. If we have no confidence that the Lord our God can guide us and protect us and provide for us, we’ll seek those things from everywhere else, trusting in the things of this world to try to have life. But when those things fail us, if we have no faith in God, we end up falling apart. **It is hard to live a life pleasing to the Lord unless we have complete confidence in all that God Is.** Unless we have the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior,

the whole world falls apart beneath our feet when troubles come upon us. The Lord Jesus is the only One whom we can have complete confidence in and not be disappointed. He is our firm foundation that gives us a solid rock upon which to stand.

Now, many will argue with me, saying that they can surely live a great life without having faith in the Lord. And we see it all around us, people going through their everyday lives, working hard, playing hard, collecting as much of the world's stuff as they can, and living it up. But what happens when a fire burns their house down? What happens when a tornado strips everything to the ground? What happens when there is a death of a close loved one, maybe a spouse or a child? What happens when a plague ravages the land (Covid19)? What happens when the market drops into the basement? Or a divorce happens? Or a war breaks out? Or any number of life-changing events occur? When the evils and terrors of our world come knocking at our door, where do we turn to? Without faith in Jesus Christ, we are devastated by what happens to us. **Faith only in the things of this world always leaves us empty.**

It's like putting your faith in the promises of a man who asks you to support him in starting a new business overhauling and reselling old golf carts. He assures you that he'll pay you back 3 times what you loan him, so you think that it's a good deal. But as time goes on, he's asking for more and more money because the parts are more expensive than he had planned, but he's almost got all the carts on a big order finished. He just needs a little more to make it happen. He assures you that they're on the 1 yard line, ready to close out on this great deal, but then nothing happens. After a few months he calls back needing more money for more parts for other carts, still promising a great return for your investment. But the investment is never returned, and you're left hanging with thousands of dollars stuck into a black-hole company. Oh, the promises keep coming, but the return never happens. And when he finally calls to set up a time when the two of you can get together for the final pay off, you think "Wonderful, finally I'm getting paid back." You drive an hour to the spot where the payment will be made, but the guy never shows up. After waiting an hour, he finally calls giving the excuse that he

was pulled over by a police officer and couldn't make it. What Frustration!!!

The world makes fantastic promises, but rarely delivers appropriately on those promises, leaving you angry, frustrated, desperate, and willing to do almost anything to see it fulfilled. **When you put your faith in anything that this world has to offer, count on being disappointed.**

But I have to tell you, God never promises what He does not intend on fulfilling. **When God makes a promise, He delivers!** When you read a promise in the pages of this book, the Bible, God has either already provided that fulfillment of the promise, or He is waiting for just the right time for you to be able to rejoice in Him through that promise being answered. We can have faith that God not only knows what is best for us, but also the best way to supply us with what we need to be in service to Him. He'll never leave us hanging! However, we need to trust in Him and have faith that He has all the power and authority and provision and desire to make every promise fully complete. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

“There was a man one day whose wife was very ill. It was in the frontier days and he had to get to a place that had medicine to save his wife's life. The only problem was that it was wintertime and in order to get to the person with the medicine, he had to cross a large lake. The lake had been iced over. His wife's life depended upon it, so he had to get up and cross this cold lake that had now been covered with ice. He was terrified! He was concerned that the ice would break. Scared to death but spurred on by love for his wife, he got down on his hands and knees and inched along, ever so carefully.

“All of a sudden, he felt a rumbling on the ice. He was even more terrified. Maybe the ice was cracking. The rumbling got louder. It became thunderous. The man was living in terror. But as the noise got closer, he looked up behind him and saw a man driving a team of horses across the ice. The horses pulled a carriage that was loaded with a bunch of boxes and it just went thundering across the ice.

“All of a sudden, the man stood up, started walking, and then running. All of a sudden, this man that was full of fear, became a man full of confidence. He learned something about the ice. He learned that if it could hold a team of horses thundering across it, it could certainly hold him.

“If you want to have more confidence in God, then hang around somebody who’s riding with God with a team of horses so that you’ll know He can carry you with whatever you’re facing. **Find somebody who’s been where you are and has experienced God’s deliverance.** Their story of faith will encourage you”² and provide you with the same faith that they have so that you can do what is needed in your life.

That is exactly what we see in Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy 1:3-14. Paul is encouraging his young disciple to continue to do the work of the Lord Jesus in Ephesus. Timothy is facing many challenges, but Paul encourages him to remember his faith, as well as the faith of those around him who brought him to believe in Jesus Christ. Listen to these great words of hope and faith. (READ 2 Timothy 1:3-14)

Timothy was like the man on the ice. He was fearful; he was timid; and he was doubting his ability to do the work of telling others about our Savior, Jesus Christ. He’s all on his own, working in Ephesus, continuing the work that Paul had begun, but he was being challenged on many sides.

But Paul had been there. He knew the difficulties and the struggles that Timothy faced, and he also knew the heart of Timothy to work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul saw the faith that Timothy grew up around, his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois living as faithful witnesses of the power of Jesus in their lives. Paul saw Timothy’s faith first hand, and encouraged him and empowered him by laying his hands upon him so that he might receive the Holy Spirit. Paul knew the power of the Holy Spirit and reminded Timothy “...*the Spirit that God has given us does not make us timid; instead, His Spirit fills us with power, love, and self-control*” (2 Tim. 1:7).

Paul was calling Timothy to remember his faith, and the One his faith had been put in. The power of the Holy Spirit is capable of achieving great things thought impossible by unbelievers. **When we receive the Holy Spirit into our lives, through faith in Jesus Christ, we are able to do whatever God calls us to do, no matter what the obstacles or difficulties.** When God calls us into His service,

² (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, pg. 99, #282)

He qualifies us with just the right abilities to do whatever it is that He has called us to do.

But it does not happen unless we believe that God can do what He has called us to do. It cannot happen unless we call out and confess the Name of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. **God cannot do His work in and through us unless we put our faith in Him to do it.** We must live by faith each and every day, confident that God “*can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us*” (Philippians 4:13). But without faith, there is no way that we can do anything for the Lord. Without faith, we shrink away, afraid of what others might think of us, worried if we’ll have any friends left, and concerned what stepping out in faith might bring to us. Without faith, we’re left crawling on the ice, in desperate need, but unable to fulfill our purpose in a way that brings life to those we love.

So Paul calls us all to “Remember Your Faith!” Stand up for the things of the Lord and don’t be ashamed of being one of His servants. Face the world boldly, confident that God will supply you with all your needs according to His riches in glory found in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

And rejoice in those who have guided you and helped you in your faith. They are the ones whom God has used to encourage you into a deeper relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. They are the ones who direct your focus on serving the Lord our God.

And then Paul challenges us by saying, “*...take your part in suffering for the Good News, as God gives you the strength for it. He saved us and called us to be His own people, not because of what we have done, but because of His own purpose and grace*” (2 Tim. 1:8b-9a). Each of us has been called by God to be His ambassadors for Christ, living our faith each day, unafraid of whatever the world might throw at us, confident that if He has called us into His service that He will protect us and use us to fulfill His purposes. **There’s no such thing as a secret service Christian!** We are all to boldly proclaim the Good News of the Gospel enabling all of those around us to find life in Jesus Christ, even if it brings suffering to us - even if it brings persecution or oppression to us. **We are not to be ashamed of Jesus Christ**, because He is the One who has “*ended the power of death and through the gospel has revealed immortal life*” (2 Tim. 1:10b). He gives new life to all who will believe in Him, and you, by faith in

Him, are the ones who God counts on to deliver this Good News to all who have not yet heard, or those who are growing in their faith (vs. 11).

Surely difficulties will come to us. Most definitely hardships will take place because we live what we believe. **But in our faith in Jesus Christ we are to be confident all the more, because we “know whom (we) have trusted, and (we) are sure that He is able to keep save until that Day what He has entrusted to (us)” (2 Tim. 1:12).**

I see it this way - if I am receiving great attacks from Satan, if I am facing severe difficulties and hardships, it is because I am striving to be a faithful witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Since I am a believer in Jesus as my Savior and Lord, and because I am striving to make Him known to all those around me, I am a threat to Satan’s empire here on earth, so he’s going to attack me as hard as he can to destroy me or discredit me so that my witness is useless and his dominance continues. But if I’m not doing anything for Jesus Christ, if I’m not being bold with my faith, and I let others fall for the lies that Satan is telling, then I’m not a threat to him and he’s going to leave me alone. In fact, Satan will reward me because I am not living for Jesus and will he’ll leave me alone to continue being a silent Christian.

Sadly, there are many who are saying that they are Christians, but who are living according to the ways of the world, and they are giving Christianity a bad name because they’re living for Satan.

But Paul encourages us, as he did for Timothy, “*Hold firmly to the true words that I taught you, as the example for you to follow, and remain in the faith and love that are ours in union with Christ Jesus. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, keep the good things that have been entrusted to you*” (2 Tim. 1:13-14).

REMEMBER YOUR FAITH! Live according to the truth of God’s word! Be a bold witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ! This world needs your testimony of how Jesus is the Lord of your life. Don’t give up. Don’t give in to anger or frustration or discouragement or depression, but be confident that God is still working and live it so that others might be strengthened in your example.

Let’s pray: Father, the stuff going on all around our world can so easily cause us to question our

faith, or to give up on You. But thank You for Your Son, Jesus, who has already gone before us to lay a path of hope and life and peace. Give such hearts that we stand strong in our faith so that we may be bold witnesses to Your power through Your Holy Spirit. Fill us once more with Your Word so that we can live for You all the days of our lives. Give us such faith that we might destroy the strongholds of Satan and bring Your kingdom here on earth. This we pray in Jesus' powerful and holy Name. AMEN.