

Study 2. How Can We Have Great Faith?

Growing Faith in God

In the Kingdom of God, Faith has substance. We have learned that; “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen Hebrews 11:1. ESV – The New King James version puts it this way: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The Christian life of faith is a mystery to those who do not know God. Even for the believer in Christ, the life of faith in God can challenge our natural understanding due to the early programming of our worldview to be according to this world’s values.

A Christian who lives by faith is something of an enigma. In his book, *The Root of the Righteous*, A. W. Tozer notes this fact eloquently. He writes: “A real Christian is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for One whom he has never seen, talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see, expects to go to heaven on the virtue of Another, empties himself to be full, admits he is so wrong so he can be declared right, goes down in order to get up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest, and happiest when he feels worst. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, and knows that which passes knowledge.”¹

When we seek to live a life of faith, we can be confident that God will provide what we need to live this life of faith. It is His delight to provide for us to step out and fulfill His purposes. We don't need to convince Him to help us. It is His will that we grow in faith. Jesus was our pattern, our model, to follow. He was dependent upon His Father to reveal His will.

So Jesus said to them, “Truly truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise” (John 5:19).

The message of our Lord Jesus Christ is for us to go and do as He did. It is, first of all, a "Come" message and then a "Go" message. We are to come to Him and be saved. 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 (Matthew 11:28-30).

When we come to Christ, we are to partner with Him by taking on His yoke and going into all the world to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). When animals were plowing the fields together, a young, inexperienced animal would be yoked to an older experienced animal, which knew just what to do. They were joined by a piece of wood, a yoke that kept them together as they plowed. Every Christian must be involved with Christ, joined by the Holy Spirit, and yoked together in this mission to reach the world for Christ. We cannot do it without Him. He wants to work in and through us; His burden is light, not heavy. Not all of us are called or equipped in the same way. Don't worry about the provision if God calls you to go somewhere or do something. God will provide for you anything that He calls you to do. God hasn't got a problem with His economy. As we said in our last study, God has given each of us a measure of faith. It can be as small as a mustard seed, but our faith can and will grow as we step out and trust our heavenly Father. I have learned that getting out of the boat of security gets the eye and care of our God. He is pleased with faith. There is a quote by Johanne von Goethe that has always inspired me to step out in faith. He said:

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous* (Camp Hill, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1986), page 156.

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, and always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. Johann von Goethe ²

I don't know Goethe's theology or where he was with God, but I think that there is an element of truth in what he says. He uses the word *Providence*, which I would replace with *God*. God moves when we commit to something led and motivated by Him. All kinds of things happen; a whole stream of events and unforeseen incidents begin to take place from our decision to get out of the security boat of trusting our power and abilities. Remember that God is outside of time and plans ahead of time for your choices when you decide to trust Him and be obedient to His leading.

When you think of people who have lived a life of faith, who comes to mind? Do you think of a Bible character, someone famous for trusting God, or do you know someone who has given you a current example of trusting God by living a life of faith?

The Faith of Jackie Pullinger

When I think of a person today with great faith, I think of Jackie Pullinger. As a young girl in Sunday school in England, Jackie decided she wanted to be a missionary but forgot about it as she grew up until she became part of a small group in a friend's home. One night she had a dream:

I saw a vision of a woman holding her arms out beseechingly as on a refugee poster. I wondered what she wanted - she looked desperate for something... The words moved past like a television credit: WHAT CAN YOU GIVE US? ³

After a series of dreams and visions, Jackie decided that she would obey what she determined to be the leading and will of God, to work among drug addicts in Hong Kong's infamous Walled City, a place ruled by the terrible Triad organization. The trouble was that no one agreed with her. When she applied to every missionary and Church organization, they refused to help and denied her financial support. They told her she didn't have what it takes to be a missionary. She didn't have the experience or qualifications, and she was too young at age 22. When she talked with a vicar, he advised her to go anyway. She gathered all her money and bought a one-way ticket to Hong Kong, China. There was no turning back; she was committed to fulfilling the will and leading of God. When she got to Hong Kong, she found a job as a teacher in a primary school in the Walled City, the city's most deprived and dangerous area. The Triads, an organization similar to the Mafia, ruled over the area, making it a scary place to live and work. Because it was so violent, even the police would not enter the Walled City.

In 1966, many of the inhabitants of the Walled City could only earn a living in poverty, working in the many sweatshops under terrible conditions. Many worked as prostitutes, sold drugs, or were on heroin or opium. Jackie was moved in her heart for them as she went to work at the school. She would walk up to them and tell them that Jesus loved them. Jackie began a small youth club to reach out to the boys who were part of the Triad gangs taking opium and heroin. She began to see the boys become Christians one by one. Many were addicts. The people started to trust that she did love them and that it was not just words spoken because she lived among them. In a 1989 interview, Jackie said:

² Forbes Quotes: [Thoughts on the Business of Life](#)

³ Jackie Pullinger. The link about Jackie is now down, but there is a YouTube video [at this link](#).

I could walk down the street and see a hundred people chasing the Dragon (shooting up heroin). You had to climb over their legs. I wanted something real to offer them, not just treatment in a center.

Many of the addicts, as she would pray for them, were released from their addiction without going through the painful withdrawal. God was in their midst, answering the prayers of Jackie and others that she led to Christ and trained. They opened a home to help those who wanted to quit heroin. This home was soon inundated with pleas for help and a place to stay. As she spoke of Jesus Christ, brutal hoods got converted, prostitutes retired from their trade, and heroin addicts found a new power that freed them from the bondage of drug addiction. In a private meeting, the Triad gang boss told Jackie he wanted to support her in getting them off heroin and opium. Her response to the gang boss was uncompromising—she wouldn't help the boys get off drugs so they could return to the gang. They were to follow Christ, not the Triad gang. To her astonishment, the gang boss renounced all claims to those who became Christians, and he also guarded the youth club against other groups who wanted to destroy the work. Hundreds discovered new life in Christ. The book *Chasing the Dragon* tells the fantastic story precisely as it happened.⁴

Can you think of a time in your life when a whole stream of events happened due to one decision? (Big or small).

The Fruit of Faith

In the previous study, we talked about faith growing as we acquire information and knowledge of God through His Word. But is it all about knowledge and learning? Do we need to study the Bible for twenty years before receiving anything from God? Of course not! All over the world, we see the people of God stepping out in faith and, like Jackie Pullinger, daring to trust that God is faithful to His Word. Of course, if you can get Bible training, you should, but God is looking for simple trust in Him. In the Bible, we see two manifestations of faith, the fruit of faith and the gift of faith. Paul the apostle wrote about the faith that is a fruit of the Holy Spirit living in the life of the believer in Christ:

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things, there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23, Emphasis mine).

The Greek word translated *as faithfulness* above is "pistis," which is translated mostly into our English word *faith*. What the Word of God tells us is that our connection to God through the Spirit of God makes us one with Him (1 Corinthians 6:15, 17), and the fruit of that relationship is like that of the life-giving sap of a Vine and its branches (John 15:1-5). The Vine, with its root in the ground, is a metaphor for being in a relationship with the person of Christ. Believers in Christ are the branches that will bear the fruit of this relationship. The attributes and character of Christ will flow into and through you as an outflow of your oneness with Jesus. The apostle Paul says that the fruit of faith, among other things, will grow the longer you are connected to Christ and walking in step with His Spirit.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul also wrote about the gift of faith:

The Gift of Faith

The gift of faith is a divine gracelet or impartation, a supernatural belief, and the ability to do something beyond your capability. Here's how Paul the Apostle described the gifting of the Holy Spirit:

⁴ *Chasing the Dragon*, written by Jackie Pullinger and Andrew Quicke. Published by Regal Books.

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-9, Emphasis mine).

This divine gracelet of the gift of faith may come for just one incidence in a person's life when they need God to show up like never before, or the gift may stay with you for the rest of your life. It can come in the middle of sheer desperation, such as the woman with the issue of blood, who reached out and touched the hem of Christ's garment and was healed (Luke 8:43-48). It most often comes to a person as an inner knowledge within his being of something that God wants to do. When Peter healed the crippled beggar at the Gate Beautiful, Peter looked straight at him, as did John, and then reached out his hand to help him to his feet with the words, **"Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk"** (Acts 3:6). With those words, instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong, and he jumped to his feet. Do you think Peter and John were surprised as the disabled man got to his feet wholly healed? How did that happen?

Peter or John's faith was not what healed him. Only a few weeks earlier, Peter had denied he even knew Jesus, but now that Peter was restored three times by the Lord Jesus (John 21), he was experiencing the Spirit of God flowing in his life. This healing, I believe, was a divine impartation of the Spirit, an intuition that came to his inner man, showing him exactly what to do. Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, tries to put the impartation of the gift of faith into words when he writes: **"Peter looked straight at him, as did John"** (Acts 3:4). This look was a fixed gaze where the Spirit was showing them both what to do.

Two Examples of Great Faith in the Gospels

In the Gospels, there are two incidences where Jesus commended two individuals for their great faith. They were both examples of a divine gracelet of the gift of faith. Let's look closely and see what we can learn from them:

¹When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, **"I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."** ¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well (Luke 7:1-10, Emphasis mine).

What was it that so pleased the Lord about this man's faith?

The passage tells us a lot about the Roman centurion's character. He probably had some servants because he was an officer in the Roman army with over a hundred men under his command, yet he cared for this sick one. We can assume, therefore, that this man was a kindly soul. Because he loved the nation of Israel and had built the city a synagogue with his own money, he was willing to spend the relational capital that he had gained with the Jewish elders of the town not on himself but on his servant, asking the Jewish elders

to plead with Jesus to heal his attendant. How many enslaved people would have loved to have a master such as this centurion? When you travel to the ruins of Capernaum in Israel, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, you can explore the synagogue ruins. There seems to be an indication (v. 6) that the centurion was told by another servant that heard the elders speaking to Jesus that the Lord was on His way to them. It could be that the centurion heard from this same servant how the elders of the Jews told Jesus that the centurion was worthy to have Jesus do this for him. But the centurion did not feel worthy.

When he discovered that Jesus was on His way to his house, he remembered that a Jew could not come under his roof (due to him being a Gentile) and stay ceremonially “clean.” We see something similar that happened in the ministry of Peter the apostle when the Lord sent him to the house of Cornelius, another Roman centurion living in Caesarea. As Peter broke with tradition by entering the Centurion's house, the Spirit of God came in power upon those attending the meeting. Other leaders severely criticized Peter for entering the home of a Gentile (Acts 11:1-2), but understanding came when Peter shared the vision that the Lord gave him (Acts 11:1-18). We read of a similar tradition at the trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate by the Jewish leaders. They would not enter the palace of the Gentile Roman governor because it would have made them ceremonially unclean, making them unfit to eat the Passover meal (John 18:28).

For this reason, the centurion sent another delegation of friends to meet Jesus on the way (v. 6), saying that he understood delegated authority and that Jesus did not need to come into his house. His leadership role as a centurion under the chain of command of the Roman army led him to believe that Jesus only had to speak the word of healing and that Christ's spiritual authority over sickness would be exercised over the servant. This man put the pieces of the pie of his knowledge into his plate of faith and stood in faith in what he believed. What were the pieces of the pie of faith (See study 1) that he brought to the situation?

- 1) He knew that healing was an act of spiritual power, and that distance was no problem to God.
- 2) He was not worthy even of Jesus walking into his house, but he knew that God acts out of mercy, not worthiness.
- 3) Not many of us would put something in the way of Jesus coming to our house. If Jesus were on the road, most of us wouldn't care about any difficulties, yet this man put himself in the shoes of Jesus and was concerned about His entering into the house of a Gentile.
- 4) His faith assured him that healing for his servant was inevitable, that it would be done even if Jesus didn't lay hands on his servant. His words revealed his heart of great faith!

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1).

The centurion was willing to take a risk, especially as Jesus was already on His way to his house. What if Jesus turned around and did not come to his home resulting in his servant not being healed? What if Jackie Pullinger got to Hong Kong and couldn't get a job and an apartment? It was risky to use all her money to get there. John Wimber, the man God used to start the Vineyard group of churches, said, “Faith is spelled R.I.S.K.” Faith can be risky. It can be scary to step out on what one thinks God is speaking to do. What if you step out in faith, and it was just an assumption on your part? It is good to ask yourself; what is the worst-case scenario if you are wrong about something that you sense God is saying for you to do? Ask yourself, “Is this biblical?” Do I have an example in Scripture? Would this bring glory to the name and character of Jesus? What would your pastor or church leaders think of this step of faith? Would this risky step bring humility to my soul if I were right or wrong? Would it foster a sense of pride in self? What would the enemy gain from whatever step I choose to take? Would this step of faith perhaps bring someone closer to Christ? Can I take this step and remain hidden in the eyes of men? Am I doing it to glorify myself?

Example Two of Great Faith:

²¹Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²²A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." ²³Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." ²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." ²⁵The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. ²⁶He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." ²⁷"Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered, "**Woman, you have great faith!** Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour (Matthew 15:21-28).

We often interpret Jesus' quietness towards us when we ask Him for something as reluctance on His part, but God often wants to take us into a new realm of faith by leaving our prayers unanswered. Andrew Murray, the great teacher and writer on prayer and faith, once said, "When the Lord is to lead a soul to a great faith, he leaves his prayers unheard." I think Jesus' response, or lack of it, to this woman was designed to bring out her faith. Notice that verse 22 says that she "came to him." And yet, when Jesus rebuffed her with the words "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel," she came even nearer and knelt before Him (v. 25). The Lord gave her what she needed because she persisted in her faith. He was delighted with the woman's persistence and trust in Him. Some people might have been put off by Jesus' apparent initial indifference to the request for help. The Canaanite woman, although she was not a Jew, was given deliverance for her daughter due to her steadfast faith.

[What do you think Jesus refers to when He speaks of "the children's bread" in verse 26?](#)

The Lord Jesus said that healings and deliverance are the "children's bread." Bread is a metaphor for the staple diet of the Middle East. Perhaps to a person from China or Japan, He would have said, "I am the rice of life," instead of "I Am the Bread of Life." A person under the covenant of God, every blood-bought child of God that has given his life to Christ, God moving in answer to faith and prayer is the staple food of the Kingdom of God, the supernatural authority of God in healing and deliverance. The power of God moving through God's people should be the regular daily bread for the child of God. This woman, being a Gentile, was outside of the covenant of God, whereas if you have given your life to Christ, you are under the covenantal promises.

What was it about the woman's faith that Jesus complimented? I am convinced that Jesus commended her for her faith because she persisted in approaching the only One who could help her and her daughter. She would not give up! God allows some situations in life to test our faith. We often give up before we get what we need. Our God loves to see us exhibit faith in Him. In the early 1800s, here in America, a man named John Derby heard of a gold strike on the West coast of America. He borrowed some money from some interested friends and staked a claim. He found a vein of gold and mined it successfully. He had paid back his friends and covered his investment when the gold ran out. He decided to get out while the going was good. He sold the mine to a man who carried on digging where John Derby had left off and hit the most significant motherlode of gold in the West. If only Derby had carried on and persisted in his digging without giving up. Don't let this happen to you, child of God. Receive God's blessings, for you are under the covenant of God with all its benefits.

Begin to step out into risky faith in God. These examples of great faith are given to us so that we might also persevere for the needs around us. Most of us live with conditions and needs in our families and friends. Both of these mentioned were individuals who trusted God to meet the needs of others who could not intercede for themselves. As we bring this study to a close, I want to challenge you to think of something to believe in God for. Do you have a vision you have given up on or a family member for which you need to see a breakthrough? Ask God to give you a gift of faith for the situation. Be open to the direction God would give you. Is there a step of faith you need to take in this situation? Please take a minute to be still

and ask God to put a problem or condition of a friend or relative on your heart that you want to put into the hands of Christ and trust Him to step into the situation.

Prayer: Father, please change me to be one that will honor you with my life. Please help me to hear your voice clearer and live a life of faith in God.

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