

Faith in the Blessing of God Changes How We Live and Speak

We are going to read our scripture passage a little bit later, but first I want to say a few things God put on my heart about faith

Hebrews chapter 11 is meant to give us an education in how to live by faith. We desperately need to know how to live by faith, because faith is how we come to God, and experience God. It's how we have the courage to obey God and do things for God in this world. It is our faith that pleases God and is rewarded by God.

Romans 1:17 says, "The righteous man shall live by faith". We LIVE by faith. Faith is the oxygen of our spiritual life! Without faith in our heart we suffocate our fellowship with God, and our joy in God. Without faith we choke our ability to do things for God with courage and perseverance. We shut down like a man trying to run a race with his airways blocked. That is why the writer of Hebrews says "without faith it is impossible to please God". We simply cannot live the life God has called us to live, without faith.

And...We desperately need a Biblical robust faith. Faith is placing confidence in God. It is clinging confidently to God... AND to all he has promised. Because, MUCH of what God has promised us, is for the future, faith must have a confident expectation of future glory. So faith generates a bright hope for tomorrow. It propels us to stake our lives on what God says is ahead. We ACT and speak NOW, based on confidence that God is real and the future he has for us is real. But...

First and foremost "we draw near to God by faith"; IE God himself is the goal of our faith! If anyone would "come to God" he must believe that God IS, AND that he is a REWARDER of those who SEEK him. Faith is about COMING to God, SEEKING God. It is how we experience the presence of God now.

We do this by putting FAITH in what GOD has done to open a door for us into his presence. This is the gospel! Jesus Christ died to bring us near to God. In the garden of Eden, God and humans, shared space. They walked and talked together freely and without shame. Adam's sin ruined this communion with God. Sin kept us out of God's space, or his presence. Jesus died to remove this barrier. It is through the blood of Jesus Christ, atoning for our sins, that we are able draw near to God.

Jesus alone opens this door to God. But we walk through that door BY FAITH. We enter into this DAILY nearness to God by faith.

If you long to know God, to experience his presence, to have him manifest himself to you, the author of Hebrews says, "Let us draw near with confidence through the new and living way Christ opened for us." Once we figure out that all our heart's deepest needs and desires are met in this place of nearness to God, then exercising our faith to come to God becomes the main activity of our soul.

*In order to motivate us to live by faith, the author of Hebrews tells us a series of brief but powerful stories of people who lived their lives with faith in God. He tells us what they accomplished, what they lived for, and looked forward to, because of their faith in God. This is to show us what faith looks like and to call us to live by faith.

Faith in God, looks like something. People with faith talk a certain way. They speak highly of God. They speak of him as real and present with them. They talk about how good God is. They believe God is worthy of their love and labor and their lives, no matter what the cost may be. They respond to God with what might look to others like crazy obedience. They choose those things in life that God values and loves. They refuse things that everybody else wants, IF they get in the way of what God wants. They would rather lose

everything in this life, if necessary, in order to know God and hear him say, “Well done”.

In Hebrews 11:20-22 God shows us what faith looks like from the lives of three men in the OT, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Verse 20, “By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. (Other translations say he blessed them regarding things to come or future things) By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

*We can maybe understand why the walls of Jericho falling down is a big faith story, but why is Isaac, Jacob and Joseph blessing their children worth talking about? (Four reasons)

First: These spoken blessings WERE an act of faith. The blessing was not just words! They were transmitting something real from God. They were doing something! They were handing to their children the tangible blessing of God even though it was invisible and for the future.

Adolf Saphire said, “It is only by faith that we can bless; for God alone is the foundation of blessing, and it is only (by faith) in HIS promise that we are able to pronounce (blessing).”

Because Isaac and Jacob BELIEVED THE PROMISED BLESSING WAS REAL, and tangible, they formally transmitted those blessings on to their sons. They acted as faithful guardians of the blessing of God, passing it on, by faith. Even the worshipful way this was done showed their faith! “Jacob blessed Joseph’s sons, bowing in worship over the head of his staff”. He blessed them with reverence because he believed God was there, and that God’s blessing was real.

This is what faith looks like in OUR lives. We believe the blessing of God upon us is real, and of great value, so we speak and act as blessed people. And we bless others!

Second: These spoken blessings shows us how important what we SAY is to the life of faith. Isaac, Jacob SHOWED their faith by these spoken blessings. Joseph showed his faith by speaking of Israel's future in the promised land. You SHOW your faith in the things you speak! How we talk manifests our faith, OR our unbelief. Jesus said "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Blessing others with our words is ONE way we show our faith. Also giving thanks, talking about things that are worthy of praise, speaking with HOPE about our resurrection, and the glorious future, being gracious and loving in the way we speak ABOUT others and TO others, are all demonstrations of faith!

Third: They showed they had faith clear to the end of life! (Which is vital!) Notice the emphasis that Jacob blessed his sons "as he was dying", and Joseph's faith-filled words were "at the end of his life". These men did not die in despair, in bitterness and unbelief over unfulfilled dreams. They died with faith that they were blessed AND that blessing was ahead. That is how we are to live and die! We are to "hold our confidence firm to the end". (3:14)

Fourth: They showed their faith by their confidence in FUTURE blessing. Isaac and Jacob spoke about things to come! We see the forward-looking faith of Joseph, in verse 22 NLT "And it was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, confidently spoke of God bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt. He was so sure of it that he commanded them to carry his bones with them when they left".

He believed God about the land promised to Abraham. So he said, God is going to bring you guys out of here! You're going to return to the promised land, and I want to go with you! (Or my bones to go with you!) That would not happen for 400 years! The Holy Spirit highlight, THIS aspect of Joseph's faith, because God loves it when we look forward by faith to the things he has promised us!!

Confidence in future blessing is an essential part of what faith is!

Faith has this forward looking spiritual optimism, because of what God has told us he has in store for those who love him! David said: "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will remain in the house of the Lord forever". The excellent wife of Proverbs 31 "smiles at the future". That is faith. Bill Gaither wrote: "Because he lives I can face tomorrow. Because he lives all fear is gone. Because I know he holds the future life is worth the living just because he lives".

Active, robust faith in the future God has promised us is real faith!

Peter said "according to his promise we are waiting for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. We will see him face to face! He will wipe away our tears. Things will be perfect! Faith is living now, with joy, expecting that in our future!

*Finally, we must understand **WHAT** the BLESSING of Abraham was which was passed down through his descendants and **WHY** it matters to us! To us blessing is often a very nebulous concept that means something very abstract or fuzzy. But in the Bible it is the ultimate favor and good that God could ever do for us. It is the ultimate status anyone, anywhere, could ever hope for, to be blessed by God. We must remember that...

Without the blessing of God all of humanity were under the judgment and wrath of God, after repeated rebellion against God from the Garden of Eden to the Tower of Babel. But God, in his great mercy and love still had a plan to make people part of his family. He started by choosing one man, named Abraham, and made him this promise, “Surely, I will BLESS you”. And through you “all the nations of the earth will be BLESSED”, meaning people all over the world would come out from under God’s judgment and wrath and INSTEAD would be blessed with God’s kindness and favor and love, for all eternity!

This blessing would flow to mankind through Abraham’s seed or descendant. Ultimately that would be Jesus Christ. So...Here is the amazing thing: We are the ultimate recipients of this blessing!! Galatians 3:14 says, “He redeemed us in order that THE BLESSING given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus”. If you are united to Jesus, you are in a tidal wave of unstoppable blessing, flowing out of God’s promise to Abraham. We will be abundantly and outrageously blessed forever!

John Piper said, “...the promise is that we will be blessed!! (God said) "I will surely bless you" (Heb. 6:14). And he means ultimate blessing, forever and ever with God in eternity, forgiven, accepted, purified, glorified, capable of unspeakable joy, triumphant over all our enemies: sin and guilt and shame and death and hell and Satan. This is God's promise.”

The BLESSING of God has been transmitted to us who hold fast to Christ!!

*The writers of the NT want us to know that we are blessed people!The letters to the churches remind us of our status as saints,

beloved of God, chosen by God, AND BLESSED BY GOD! Paul wrote: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”. Peter said, “God has called you for this very purpose that you might inherit a blessing”. To be blessed by God is another way of expressing our salvation. To be saved IS to be blessed!

Let me summarize some applications for us:

First: Learn to encourage and nourish your own faith. We need to be able to do that! There was a time in David’s life, that he and his men lost every possession they had including their wives. His men spoke of stoning him. But “David encouraged himself in the Lord”. He brought his heart BACK to a place of faith, when he was deeply discouraged. Instead of letting our thoughts run wild with fear, anxiety and despair, we must preach to our own hearts the encouraging truths of God. And sometimes we have to do that all by ourselves.

Second: We must believe that we are blessed, and that the blessing of God upon us is of great value. The fruit of faith, is that we will speak and act as blessed people. Isaac and Jacob regarded the blessing of God a real thing, with real outcomes, that were HIGHLY VALUABLE! Passing on the blessing of God was better than passing on a million dollars. It was what really mattered to them!

To speak of this blessing as something real and valuable, is an act of faith. It pleases God, when when we consider ourselves blessed! It gives him pleasure. Or makes him happy! He sees that attitude in our hearts and he says, “I like that!”.

Third: Something as seemingly small as a word spoken in faith, pleases God and will be rewarded by God! It seems to us that the blessings spoken by these men was a very small action. Yet God

highly regarded it, simply because of the faith involved! God will remember the seemingly small things you do, and say, if you do them in faith.

Fourth: Choose to hold fast your confidence all the way to the end of life. (As these 3 men did) Do not move toward despair or bitterness over unfulfilled dreams. Choose to finish strong. Choose to grow in faith as you grow old! Choose die with faith.

Tony Snow, former White House press secretary died of colon cancer in 2007. Before he died he said in the valley of the shadow of death he found that the Christian faith “is not something doughy, passive, pious or soft”. He went on to say, Faith “draws you into a world shorn of fearful caution.” He was saying that faith in God does NOT strip our life of dangers, but it DOES strip our lives of fear and enables us to die without fear!

Five: Chose to see beyond the things that are presently seen, to the blessings of God, we have not yet seen. God’s vision for us and his blessing for us, is so big that it cannot possibly fit into one lifetime here on earth! It is a blessing so big it will take all eternity to receive. He will show us the riches of his grace in kindness toward us for all eternity! And God is doing it for us! There’s an old gospel song that says, “Farther than my eyes can see, so much farther than my eyes can see. There’s a kingdom of heaven, pastures of glory, and it’s all waiting there for you and me.” God delights in us when we believe that, and live for that, and rejoice in that!

Pray: Father, How blessed we are to be out from under the wrath and judgment we deserved and to be in a status of massive blessing, both now and forever! Open our hearts to appreciate that like we should! Teach us to talk like blessed people, and to bless others by faith, and to remind one another how blessed we are.

Graciously make us aware when we are not speaking, or acting or thinking from a place of faith in you, so that we may repent, and come back again to a believing heart, that pleases you. With David, we pray, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer”.
May our hearts be full of faith in You! Amen