

When Your Faith Seems to Fail

2/14/21

Review: **2 Cor 5:7** - we walk (live each day) by faith and not by sight (our senses or reason)

The only way to live through these difficult times and finish our journey well is faith

Because we have so many other things to support us and provide what we need, most of us have not really learned to live by faith

Only use faith in an emergency

Began by looking at what faith is and why it is so vital to learn

Today what faith is not and how to respond when your faith seems to fail

Faith is how we receive from God what He has promised

From God's side, it is already given or done

But we receive what He has promised by believing when we have not yet seen

The Bible tells what the faith is that will receive from God's promises

Mark 11:23 - and not doubt in his heart but believes

Rom 10:9&10 - we are saved by believing in our heart

Prov 4:23 - out of the heart flow the forces of life

It is receiving it in your heart - you are so convinced that it is done that what your senses tell you doesn't change what you believe

There are several counterfeits to faith that we often mistake for genuine faith

They are counterfeits because we are believing but the belief is not a settled knowing in our heart

1. Mental assent

Before we can believe in our heart, our mind has to accept that what God's Word

To believe in our mind is good, but it is not enough

Mentally agreeing with the promise is not believing in our heart

Many believers stay at this point and assume they are in faith

Real faith embraces God's promise with their heart and identify with the answer

Many pray & "believe" but still talk and act as if nothing changed

E.g., still look for sympathy or attention - have not identified with answer

2. Denial - real faith does not deny the problem

Denial is a tempting way for us to avoid the pain or fear of whatever we are facing

It is easy to use faith concepts as a way of denying that the challenge is really there

Faith doesn't deny what the senses tell us it there, it believes what God has said in spite of what our senses tell us

3. It is not our will overriding God's will

Real faith is always so that God's will can be done in a situation

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We can do the right thing but for the wrong motive

We can try to force what we want for our own purposes and not for God's will and glory

What if we have been in real faith and yet we don't see the answer we believed for?
That is exactly what has happened with Denny -

The challenge to our faith

- If we were not a church that believed that God responds to faith and that we serve a God who does miracles today.
 - If we didn't believe that God's Word means exactly what He said and we can trust His Word,
 - Then all we would be experiencing today is the grief and loss of someone special whom we loved and who loved us.
- What makes his passing more challenging is that we are a church that believes these things
- I know that Dawn and many of us were exercising real faith
 - Not mental assent
 - Not denial
 - Not trying to force our will for our purposes
- We believed God's Word
- We prayed in faith
- But he was not raised up
- Others have experienced this same result
- How do we reconcile this apparent failure with what we believe?

1. Asking sincere questions is normal and healthy

It is not unbelief to ask, "What happened?" "Why did our faith seem to fail?"

Asking means we really expected results

Matt 17:19 - the disciples after they didn't get results asked Jesus

His answer was that it required a different level of faith

What is dangerous is to let our questioning erode our faith

2. Wrong responses

Give up on prayer - it doesn't work, etc.

Satan knows the power of prayer and wants to take this opportunity to blunt your power over him

Continue to pray but not expect any results

This is more dangerous than giving up -

Makes us lukewarm Christians

What can we know and what should we do?

1. Ultimately, unless God shows us, we can't know why our prayers were not answered

Deut. 29:29 - there are secret things God has with His children and they belong to Him

The things He reveals belong to us

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Job - The whole focus of their discussion was why Job went through his suffering

But when God arrives on the scene, He never says why, He only reminds Job who He is

In our humanness we want to understand - God expects us to trust

2. When it comes to praying for someone else, there are limits on what our faith can do.

Praying for someone else is different than believing for ourselves

Our faith cannot override someone else's will

Mark 6:5-6 Jesus could do no mighty works in his hometown because they would not believe who He was

For a believer there is a private and intimate connection between them and the Lord that we cannot know - especially when they are facing death

3. Regardless of our experience, it does not change God's Word

We can never judge God's Word by our results

To do so makes us judges of God

Matt 17:14-18 His disciples could not cure the man's son, but

Jesus did not conclude that it was not God's will

Satan is the one who challenges God's Word

4. God has a different perspective on the death of one of His children

Psalms 116:15 - it is precious because God sees it from the other side

Phil 1:21-24 - Paul wrestled between death which was far better for him and staying here which was better for them

5. We need to focus our love and support for Dawn and Denny's girls and his family.

6. This whole experience has brought many of us together out of love for our brother and his family. Let us not lose that love and focus.

7. Ultimately, everything has to go back to the one thing Jesus has called all of us to do.

Matt 16:24 - we are all called to

1) deny myself - that means I can't feel sorry for myself and get lost in my loss

2) take up my cross - identify with the sacrificial love Jesus showed for me

3) follow Him - my focus must be on Him

Denny was always the one I used as an example for following Him - Denny has now followed Him right into glory

Prayer for Dawn and her family

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