

11. Living by Faith (1Q 2015—Proverbs)

Biblical material: Prov. 28:4, 7, 9; Rom. 1:16, 17; Gal. 3:24; Prov. 28:5; 1 John 2:15–17; Prov. 29:13.

Quotes

- Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness. *Martin Luther*
- Faith isn’t the ability to believe long and far into the misty future. It’s simply taking God at His Word and taking the next step. *Joni Erickson Tada*
- Our belief in God is not blind faith. Belief is having a firm conviction something is true, not hoping it’s true. *Max Lucado*
- The most important lesson that I have learned is to trust God in every circumstance. Lots of times we go through different trials and following God’s plan seems like it doesn’t make any sense at all. God is always in control and he will never leave us. *Allyson Felix*
- Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. *Corrie Ten Boom*
- It isn’t as bad as you sometimes think it is. It all works out. Don’t worry. I say that to myself every morning. It all works out in the end. Put your trust in God, and move forward with faith and confidence in the future. The Lord will not forsake us. He will not forsake us. If we will put our trust in Him, if we will pray to Him, if we will live worthy of His blessings, He will hear our prayers. *Gordon B. Hinckley*

Questions

So how *do* we live by faith? How is this demonstrated in our lives? Do we understand right? How are we made right by trusting God? Does our faith save us, or is it God? How can we best explain what we mean when the phrases can get in the way? O what should we be *doing*?

Bible summary

Prov. 28:4, 7, 9 reminds us of the importance of listening to wise instruction. Prov. 28:5 tells us: “Evildoers do not understand what is right, but those who seek the LORD understand it fully.” While we are all able to see, do we really “see”? (Prov. 29:13). Prov. 29 references discipline and justice, aspects that we should never forget. Paul makes this crystal clear in Romans 1:16, 17 FBV: “I’m certainly not ashamed about the good news, for it’s God’s power to save everyone who trusts in him—to the Jewish people first, and then to everyone else as well. For in the good news God is revealed as good and right, trustworthy from start to finish. As Scripture says, “Those who are right with God live by trusting him.” “Christ came so that we could be made right by trusting him.” Gal. 3:24 FBV. That’s why we don’t love the world—all that is not part of trusting God. (1 John 2:15–17).

Comment

Most people think that they have to *do* something in order to earn God’s favor, to please him. I remember talking with a woman about her experience. She had tried *so hard*.

Doing everything her church leaders told her she had to do. Making sure that her behavior was faultless. As if she were trying to impress God, just as we try to impress those around us. The result? It made her life miserable, and she ended up hating God. Sad, tragically sad. Because even in human relationships, the ones that last, the one that are meaningful, are not based on trying to impress. Only by being what you really are can you hope to have a deep and enduring relationship.

The same with God. He love us just as we are. Not that he loves all the mess of sin that we have got into, but he still sees what we can be. “God demonstrates his love for us in that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.” (Romans 5:8 FBV). He came here to this earth for that very purpose: to show us what he was really like (John 14:9), and to win us back to love him and to trust him. What God most wants is that love relationship based on mutual trust, and the Cross shows the ultimate trustworthiness of God.

Jesus said, “When I am lifted up from the earth I will attract everyone to me.” (John 12:32 FBV). The attractive power of God is his character exemplified in the fact that he wants to love all of his unlovable, rebellious children. He offers friendship, and saving, healing love. Think about it! How do you form a lasting relationship with anyone? Can you call someone friend without spending time together, doing things together, sharing life together?

Same with God. You can’t call God friend if you don’t take time out together. God is not interested in a long-distance relationship—he wants to be involved with you, be close beside you, the one you call first! So to have a lasting relationship with God, *you* have to put time into it.

A good friend came to me and told me that she’d ‘lost her faith’—speaking in the same way as if she’d left her handbag on a bus. Suddenly she’d woke up one morning and realized that she didn’t have a relationship with God any more. But in reality such a change doesn’t come overnight. It comes from years of neglect, of taking God for granted, of forgetting to have Him involved in your day-to-day life.

Think of those people who *did* have a good and lasting relationship with God. [Examples: Abraham, Moses, Job, see Hebrews 11 etc]. They weren’t perfect, but they knew where to go when they went off course. They realized that their failures were due to their failure to take time with God and to trust him completely. But despite their failures, they were still *friends of God*. That is the objective, that is what God wants. And it should be what we want: to be friends of the Friendly God.

Ellen White Comments

Live the life of faith day by day. Do not become anxious and distressed about the time of trouble, and thus have a time of trouble beforehand. Do not keep thinking, “I am afraid I shall not stand in the great testing day.” You are to live for the present, for this day only. Tomorrow is not yours. Today you are to maintain the victory over self. Today you are to live a life of prayer. Today you are to fight the good fight of faith. Today you are to believe that God blesses you. {HS 142}.

Watch, pray, work—this is the true life of faith. {5T 235}

It is no time to be ashamed of our faith. We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. The whole universe is looking with inexpressible interest to see the closing work of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. {CE 212-3}