

"Faith in Prayer"

Dallas Willard - Renovaré at APU [52:12]

Scribe's Comments - The session was transcribed from the recording in good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The **bold** and underline offer the scribe's emphasis and the [brackets] refer to other Willard teachings.



"Faith in Prayer" (audio)

Living prayer means a kind of prayer that has a life of its own. It supports us instead of us supporting it. A principle of strength that organizes and gives a strategy to us living for God.

Living prayer contrasts with dead prayer. Dead prayer gives prayer a bad name. It doesn't seem to be a joyous thing. A church prayer meeting is one where the fewest people show up. Prayer is isolated from our lives. We tack it on but we don't know where to tack it on. That's because prayer has not made sense to us. We're grinding it out. It is not a vital part of our lives. It indicates that we have not really got the connection between prayer and the abundant life that God has given us in His son.

-> The missing link is the link of faith:
What is faith and how does it relate to prayer?

To refresh our thinking about prayer and to see how prayer fits into the kind of life everyone wants but very few know how to get.

James 5:15, *"The prayer of faith..."* [3:00]

A high percentage of folks who profess faith in Christ when they hear we should pray, they say, *"Yeah, we should pray. What else?"*

What is **the Prayer of Faith?**

Many people who have faith in prayer seem not to be able to pray the prayer of faith. When we look at our actual practices, it's not that prayer doesn't make sense, as often it's faith that doesn't make sense.

Mark 11:12-14, 20-26 - Cursing of the Fig Tree [5:10]

Jesus responded, *"Have the faith of God"* (v. 22)
[Willard states - not "in" God; literal Greek reading "of"]

"Faith" - The attitude God has when He decides to do something.

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God works by the speaking of His Word in His Kingdom. He is the ultimate source of everything and in control of everything. How God has faith when He acts through His word.

"When you stand prayer, Forgive if you have anything against anyone." (v. 25)

The attitude of faith is an attitude that ties you into the order where forgiveness is the natural thing to do because of faith. Forgiveness comes from faith. Forgiving opens the doorway to faith. They go together because of the nature of what faith contacts. When God creates, He sees through faith the reality of which He speaks.

How would you have felt if you were standing there?

"Cast the mountain into the sea..." What is happening is we are being jerked by Jesus and His teachings about faith and prayer out of an order that is godless.

—> You can't have the kind of faith that makes living prayer and have life as usual.

If you want a normal life with prayer like a spigot you turn on when you need it, you will never have living prayer. If you want living prayer, you have to understand you are signing on to live in a different world. That's why faith is so important. Faith is the vision of that other world.

Refer to three sermons - *1872 Edition of Wesley's Sermons* - 56, 60, 72
Some of the finest things written on the subject of faith.

If you want to know what living prayer is, and you know that living prayer is the prayer of faith, you want to know,

"What is faith?" and *"How can I have it?"*

What is Prayer?

[13:00]

"Communication with God about what we are doing together."

That's why we pray "In Jesus' Name" because that's what we're doing together. We are involved in the work of God. I'm praying for the glory of God. God is good. He doesn't like bad things. Find something good and pray for it.

* Agnes Sanford - *"Pray for something for 3 days."*

"That experiment totally changed my attitude about prayer."

I had never brought prayer down into life in that way. That had not transferred into my readiness to take everything into prayer.

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What is Faith?

[17:15]

"Faith is relying on something as if it were so."

You are prepared without things to act as if it were so.

"Faith" is the same everywhere it shows up - teacher, parent, God

* Sitting in a chair = faith

We are use to calling faith what isn't faith at all. We are use to saying we have faith because we want to believe something we don't believe. Wanting to believe is not believing. Feeling we ought to believe is not belief.

Jesus Asleep in the Boat - Matthew 8

[19:20]

"Don't you care we are about to die?"

"You 'Little-Faiths'. Why did you doubt?"

Normal reaction - "Why not doubt?"

They had enough faith in Jesus to know it was important to wake him.

Prayers of desperation are expressions of faith.

Jesus had the kind of faith that allowed Him to go sleep because He knew that God was in control.

Hebrews 11:1 - *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence (proof) of things not seen."*

Prayer in faith and action in faith allows us to touch the unseen world of God. What is not yet before us, we know is there.

"Substance" - essence or reality. The underlying reality that causes something to come about to be what it is. Nearly everything in your life comes about because of faith.

* Education Degree - What is going to bring the degree into reality is your confidence to act together with other things to bring it about.

Faith in God brings in reality of what would not otherwise be.

One of the greatest hindrances to prayer is that most people think it won't make any difference. If you ask, will it make any difference? Some think God is a great cosmic stare. You think God has an interesting life? When I get done reading theology books, you think God would go out of existence.

God is big enough to not have to stare. If he wants to put you or I in charge to administrate something, he can do that. We think of God as a cosmic parent. Most parents are having on by their toenails. He is big enough to make it interesting, to give you responsibility, to let you fail, to step in and

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redeem, to act with you as a loving, powerful, wonderful person who is so great it is easier to exist than not exist.

That's why faith is the substance of things hoped for. When you pray in faith and it emerges out of nothing, you wonder if you are dreaming.

When you begin to pray and God begin to answer, your main temptation is to explain things away. If you do that, you're probably going to have a dry period when you don't see any coincidences.

God begins to cal that which is not as though it were in response to your faith.

Faith is not a kind of qualification for an answer.

Hebrews 1:6 - *"They who approach God must believe that He is and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."*

One of the things that freezes us is a misunderstanding of faith that God takes it as a personal favor if we believe in Him. So that when you pray, God inspects your mind and says, "Wow, there's faith there." And, zowie! you hit the jackpot. You got it!

We take faith as if it were a work of righteousness. It is not a work of righteousness. It is a reality that has it causes and effect. Faith is not magic. Faith is a confidence that leads you to interact with reality in such a way that a result comes.

* Faith when I turn on a light. The lights did not make the light come on. Faith led me to act and my action tied into a system of reality and that brought result.

What I'm talking about now is most important. We think of this marvelous qualification that will shake the goodies down from heaven. It isn' like that at all.

* Your confidence in a fellow worker is not some qualification that because they like, they cooperate. Your faith in a fellow worker causes you to interact and an attitude toward them. It's the whole relation that brings a response.

Fatih is not some kind of qualification. Often, it is very imperfect faith that brings the answer because the imperfection of the faith did not prevent a stumbling, bumbling action which resulted in someone being thrown on the reality of God. It is the action in response to faith that shows the reality of God coming into our life. It's when we act, when we move. So many folks will not pray. People scared to pray except for the routine prayers no one

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expects anything to happen. They are scared what people will think if nothing happens. That person is not in position to pray, they need to repent.

Prayer is fundamentally an act of love. When we love people enough, we pray for them. Many of you who have kids, you know that. Love leads to prayer because love makes us know our helplessness. We have to have God. We cry out to God because of our love. We cry out in the imperfection of our understanding, when we don't what to do, we don't believe we can do it. We don't understand God and ye we cry out in prayer because love compels us. When we love enough, even if we don't have faith, we'll pray.

We have to be turned outside of ourselves. "Humble yourself in the hand of God." Getting out of ourselves in prayer. Stepping forward for what is bigger than we can manager. Not because we qualify but because we have moved toward God.

* People who don't understand come to Jesus Christ.

Three Things that are the Content of the Faith of Jesus Christ [36:00]

1.) God is Here

"Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand."

Heaven is where you head is. Heaven starts right here.

"Our Father who art in heaven" not far away in space in time.

Our Father always near us. God is not at a distance.

"My prayers didn't get to the ceiling." They got it all wrong.

God is below the ceiling.

2.) God is Able

[37:45]

There is nothing go hard for God for God holds everything together anyways.

Colossians 1 - In Jesus Christ, all things hold together. There isn't anything already held together by God.

3.) God is Good

[39:00]

I John 1:5 *"This is the message we've heard in him. God is light and in Him there is not darkness."*

Don't believe anything bad about God.

Many folks believe a lot of bad things about God. God is good.

Nahum 1:7, "A stronghold in a day of trouble and he

II Chronicles 9:16, "His eyes are fixed on those..."

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If you feel that, it is not condemnation, you've got a problem with it. You've got to be honest with the doubts that well up - "If God is good then why does...?"

What is the will of God? Anything that is good.
Find something that is good and pray for it.
God does not will bad things to happen.

If you've got serious doubts about whether God is in favor of good things for you or others, you've got a problem. You need to hear the message, "*God is light and in Him there is no darkness.*"

Theoretical Faith not Practical Faith

[43:00]

We actually believe things in our heads that our bodies don't believe.

We believe there is a God but our bodies are trained differently.

* Peter to Jesus, "I will not forsake you." He had it in his head but not in his body. "Thou art the Christ!" He knew it in his head. He didn't have it any place else.

The mark of a person who believes things theoretically, the last thing they will think to do is pray. After they worry, fret and try everything else, and when everything else, they will think, "maybe we should pray."

Practical faith is when you automatically pray first then you do everything you can. You don't do everything you can and then send up a flag.

Practical faith is where your body believes, your mouth moves, your hand moves to God first, then you do everything you can.

Philippians 4:6 "pray and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God and the peace of God that passes understanding will guard your hearts and minds."

All the anger, fear, need to control will disappear because of the vision of reality that is faith. That's the prayer of faith when you come to the place where in the vision you are confident that the need will be met.

You get this faith by opening yourself actively and energetically to receive the word of Christ and His gospel. Don't try to have faith. You do not have faith by trying to have faith. You have faith by opening yourself to the gospel. The Word of God has a power in itself. Opening your heart and mind. Ask yourself what are the things you are worried about. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness to live as He lived and do what He did. You will experience more and more of the kingdom.

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As you put yourself in the context of trust that if God doesn't come through, you're hung. You will move from faith to faith - faith you have to the faith you don't have but you are in the process of getting.

We come back to the end - would we really like to have that kind of faith?

To have that kind of faith means there is no life as usual.

You can't have life as usual and tack on a little faith, a little God..like the politicians do.

You have to ask yourself a question:

What will I be willing to do to have this kind of faith?

That's where the heart begins to palpitate.

If people devoted a quarter of the time to their faith the they do to learning to play tennis, the land would be filled with spiritual giants.

The question is - what are you willing to do to have this kind of faith?

What are you able and willing to do with your body that would make it a living sacrifice to God and transform it that your body believes what your mouth professes.

- **The simple version - follow Jesus...** just do the things that He did and your faith will grow. That's what He call us to.

The prayer of faith - the faith that gives living prayer - is the faith that Jesus had and which He holds out to us in His gospel, His preaching, His teaching, His mighty deeds and through inducting us into a life of the same thing so that the works that He did we will do, and collectively even greater works than His collectively because He has gone to the Father and related us directly through His own person to the infinite resources of God.

~ ~ ~ **End of Session @ 52:12** ~ ~ ~

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