

"Faith in Prayer"

Dallas Willard - Renovaré at APU, 2007 [52:12]

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"The Role of Faith in Prayer" (audio)

"Living" prayer, to me, means a kind of prayer that has a life of its own. It means a kind of prayer that supports *us*, instead of us supporting it. It means a principle of strength that organizes and gives a strategy to our efforts to live for God. To learn what it is like to be a human being living to the full in his redemptive kingdom.

Living prayer, of course, we know all too well, contrasts with "dead" prayer. Have you ever had an experience with dead prayer? I've had a few of those myself. And I think, uh, dead prayer is what gives prayer such a bad name. Because you can almost hear people groan when you say, "Now we're going to pray," in any context. It doesn't seem to be a kind of joyous sort of thing.

In many of our churches, if you have a regular prayer meeting, usually that will be the meeting where the fewest people show up. That's because we have a kind of praying that goes on that is isolated from our lives. A little something that perhaps we think we ought to tack on, but we don't know quite where to tack it on. And we might set a regular time where we're going to do it whether we like it or not, but very often we just don't show up when the time comes around.

And that's because prayer has not made sense to us. That's just basically the answer. That's why that happens. We're doing it; we're grinding it out. But it is not a vital part of our life, and it indicates that we have not really got the connection between prayer and the rest of the redemptive, abundant life that God has given to us in his Son.

And the missing link of the connection there, I think, really is the link of faith. And actually I will say at the end of my talk this evening, once we get the faith established, then we need to talk some about method. But the main missing link is the link of faith.

What is faith, and how does it relate to prayer? Now this evening I want to give us some scripture passages to meditate on, to think about. Hopefully you'll be able to see them in a new light and perhaps that can provide a kind of point of contact that will enable us to refresh our thinking about prayer,

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and see how prayer fits in to the kind of life everyone wants, but very, very few people know how to get.

James 5:15, "*The prayer of faith...*"

[3:00]

Let me take as a text the words from the 5th chapter of James. And the only hesitation I have about taking this as a text is that it really is about sickness and suffering, and not just about prayer. But it uses a phrase in the 15th verse of the 5th chapter of James that I'll want to just use as the text from which we'll go on into some other passages and then into some exposition and explanation about faith, and life, and prayer.

This is talking about people who are suffering, people who are sick. And its advice to those who are suffering is (verse 13) they should pray. And, of course, now, I don't know about you, but I know that a high percentage of folks who profess faith in Christ, when they hear they should pray, they say, "Right. What else?" Everybody knows we should pray.

But listen to the rest of the passage: "Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church, and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise them up, and anyone who has committed sins, those will be forgiven." Now the phrase that I want to take out of that passage is just simply "the prayer of faith". The prayer of faith.

What *is* the prayer of faith?

Many people who have faith in prayer seem not to be able to pray the prayer of faith. And when we begin to look at our actual practices, I think that what we see is that it is not so much that prayer doesn't make sense, as it is that faith doesn't make sense.

Mark 11:12-14, 20-26 - Cursing of the Fig Tree

[5:10]

What is faith? Hold that question before you now, as we look at another passage or two. A well-known passage in Mark the 11th chapter—this is a passage in which on the previous day, Jesus had, on his way to the temple, turned aside to a fig tree. You're perhaps familiar with the story. He turned aside to the fig tree, and he had hoped to find something on it to eat, because he was hungry. And there was nothing on it but leaves. And as Jesus said to the fig tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And so the next day, they're coming back by there, and Peter is astonished, because

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he looks at the fig tree, and he sees that it's not just dead—it's withered. You know the difference between green wood and dry wood. And over the period of the night, because of the word which Jesus had spoken to this tree, it had not only died, it had withered away. And Peter said, "Look, rabbi" (we might say today, "Look, professor"—it's interesting that we don't think of Jesus in those terms very often, but truly that's what "rabbi" means). "Look, professor—the fig tree you cursed has withered away." Now listen to Jesus' response. Jesus responded by saying to them (and this is 11:21 and following in the gospel according to Mark). Jesus responded by saying to them, "Have the faith of God." Have the faith of God.

Many of your versions read, "Have faith in God." There is an important nuance that you need to think about that is captured by the literal Greek reading: 'have the faith of God'. And here is what the faith of God is like. Here is what the kind of attitude that God has when he decides to do something. God works by the speaking of his word in his kingdom. He is the ultimate source of everything, and in control of everything, and here is how God has faith when he acts through his word.

And if this is a little bit stunning or startling to you, you can be sure it stunned and startled the people who were standing there, listening to Jesus explain the kind of faith it took to do what he did. "The truth is," Jesus said, "that whoever tells this mountain, 'be caught up, and cast into the sea,' and has no hesitation in his heart, but believes that what he says happens, will have it. So I am telling you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you receive, and you will have them. And when you stand praying"—and this is so central to the whole picture—"when you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone."

So you see, the attitude of faith is an attitude that ties you in to an order where forgiveness is the natural thing. It's the *natural* thing to do. Because of faith. Forgiveness comes from faith. Forgiving opens the doorway to faith. Forgiveness and faith go together because of the nature of what faith contacts.

When God creates, he sees, through faith, the reality of that which he speaks. And all of these verses in the Bible—and I'm just giving you a few of them this evening—it's kind of like lobbing hand grenades out into the audience, and you all kind of want to run for cover. You know, I mean, how would you have felt, if you were standing there, and Jesus was explaining what had happened, and he says, "Well, now, you know, just have faith, the faith of God. Because if you say to this mountain, 'Be thou caught up and cast into the sea,'" and so forth and so on, what do you feel at that point?

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What do you think at that point? You think, "Man, another cow flew by." What is happening, you see, is we are being pulled, jerked, by Jesus and his teachings about faith and prayer, we are being *jerked* out of an order that is godless.

And very often when that pull comes to me, I say, "Wait, Lord, am I quite ready for this? Am I quite ready for this?" Because, you see, I am going to say this now, and I am going to repeat it at the end, so you you'll know when I get there—it's when I repeat this: *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 kind of like a spigot over here, where when you need it, you go turn it on? You will never have living prayer. You'll never have it. If you want living prayer, you have to understand, you are signing on to live in a different world. And that's why faith is so important. It is because faith is the vision of that other world. It is the vision of that other world.

I have so much to say to you tonight that I won't get said, that I want in this context to refer you to three sermons by John Wesley on the nature of faith. I hope that in the library that you have the 1872 edition of Wesley's sermons. And if you will look at sermon 56, 60, and 72 in that edition, you will find some of the finest things that have ever been written on the nature of faith. Now you may not be quite up to it; Wesley was an unusual fellow. He begins one of these sermons by quoting a Latin phrase from the late medieval Schoolmen which means in effect there's nothing in the intellect which is not previously in the senses. You ever heard a sermon on that? But if you want to understand what faith is, I urge you to read those three sermons by Wesley. And he will do more to help you understand what I'm going to this evening go over very quickly, very sketchily in the time I have about the nature of faith.

Because, you see, if you want to know what living prayer is, and you know that living prayer is the prayer of *faith*, what's the next thing you want to know? What is faith? And what's the next question you want to know? How can I have it?

What is Prayer?

[13:00]

So now let's, let's proceed in a kind of academic manner here if you wish and say first of all, "What is prayer?" Now you get 8500 statements about it and they're all good. I'm going to give you my version of what prayer is. My version of prayer is this: *it is communication with God about what we're*

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doing together. That's what prayer is. It's communication with God about what we're doing together. And back when God and I weren't doing anything together, we didn't have anything to talk about. And I know what's bothering people who come to me and say, "What do you say to God?"

You understand what I mean? The question is, what are they doing together? Now if you're not doing anything together with God, you're probably not going to have much to say to him. See? So prayer is communication with God about what he and I are doing together. That's why we pray "in Jesus' name". It's because he and I are doing this together. We don't say "in Jesus' name" just sort of as a nice way so everyone will know we're done. You know? We say, "in Jesus' name"—actually you don't even have to say it; but you do have to do it—we pray in Jesus' name because we're not out here trying to get something for us. We're out here involved in the work of God.

Now the work of God actually includes me and my well-being. But when I pray for me and my well-being, I'm not just praying for me because I want well-being, I'm praying for my well-being for the glory of God.

See, God is good. He doesn't like bad things. I'm often just puzzled by people who can't figure out what to pray for in the will of God—just find something good, and pray for it! Find something good and pray for it. Say, "Well, I might be wrong." Don't worry about it. You'll get it straight. Just stay with it.

A real turn-around point in my life was one day when a little lady named Agnes Sanford came to Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church and she got up there and stood like she had just escaped from the pantry (which she probably had—she was very much at home in the pantry) and she said, "Now for three evenings we're going to talk about prayer." And she said, "I want you to choose now something that you're going to pray for for three days." And she said, "It doesn't matter what it is: something that you're concerned about, and you want to take up with God for three days."

That experiment totally changed my attitude toward prayer. And I knew what prayer was before that. And I had seen answers to prayer. But you see, I had never brought prayer down in to life in that way. For some reason, I had never put all of the teachings of Jesus about the nature of God, and how he wants to be involved, and how he *is* involved in our lives.

You see, I knew that he was keeping account of the hairs on my head, and yet somehow that had not translated into my readiness to simply take any

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and everything before God constantly in prayer, and to involve him in my life at that level. Prayer is communicating with God about the things we're doing together. Not just the religious things—all of the things we're doing together. All of them.

What is Faith?

[17:15]

Now faith. Ok. We're going to have to spend most of the rest of our time on faith. You've had some teaching about prayer already, and I think we do have a better sense of what prayer is, but not as clear about what faith is. So let me just give you a simple statement now, ok? *Faith is relying on something as if it were so.* Faith is relying on something as if it were so. *It means you are prepared without thinking to act as if it were so.*

Now we'll have to make some distinctions later on, but that's the basic idea of faith. Faith is the same everywhere it shows up. Your faith in your teacher in the mathematics class, in algebra, your faith in your father, or your mother, your faith in whoever you have faith in, or whatever you have faith in, is exactly the same thing as your faith in God. It is reliance upon something as if it were so.

You want to see faith? See this gentleman sitting here in that chair? He has got faith in that chair. If he didn't have faith in that chair, do you think he'd be sitting there that way? No, he wouldn't be, see. That's faith. Whooo...flop! Flop. That's faith. That's what reliance is, faith is.

See, one of the things that messes us up so badly in our culture today is we're used to calling faith what isn't faith at all. We're used to saying we have faith because we want to believe something we don't believe. Wanting to believe isn't believing. Or feeling we ought to believe. That's not believing. Belief is flopping. See, that's faith. That's faith.

Jesus Asleep in the Boat - Matthew 8

[19:20]

Here's faith: Jesus and his friends were on this two-and-a-half year camping trip they're on, and they're out here in the midst of the lake, and a big storm comes up in the middle of the night. Don't know if it was in the night or the day, but a storm came up. And they were in real trouble. Think this one was in the day. Matthew the 8th chapter, you can check me out. You know what Jesus is doing? What's he doing? He's doing what this guy right here is just about to do. [Laughter] I got his attention, I ain't going to let him go to sleep! No, I'm just kidding you. He's asleep. He's asleep! What's the rest of them doing? They're screaming! Who had faith? Jesus had faith.

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And what did he say when he woke up? Finally they got—one version says, it's so interesting, how the heart reveals itself—in one of the versions, the guys finally say, "Don't you care that we're about to drown?" [Mark 4:38, CEV] And he said—actually he uses a, as I recall in that passage, he uses a word, a kind of nickname, "little faiths" [ὀλιγόπιστοι]. Little faiths. He says, "Oh, you little faiths. Wherefore didst thou doubt?" Why did you doubt? Now think about that for a moment. Why did you doubt? I mean, the normal human reaction would be "Why not doubt?", right? "Let us all doubt together!"

Why not doubt? You see, Jesus had faith in God. Now these fellows had enough faith in Jesus to know that it was important to get him awake. So they had some faith, didn't they? And prayers of desperation have a genuine element of faith in them. And many of the clearest answers I've ever had to prayers have been prayers of desperation. I wish I had time tonight to tell you a few, maybe we'll see how it goes. But prayers of desperation *are* expressions of faith. But Jesus, you see, had the kind of faith that allowed him to go to sleep because he knew that God was in control of everything.

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

Let me move on quickly now. If you've got the basic idea of faith, let's take some scriptural statements, one in particular from the 11th chapter of Hebrews, and work on that for a moment. Hebrews 11 tells us, first verse, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, or the proof of things not seen. It's the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of, or proof, of things not seen. In other words, prayer in faith, allows us, an action in faith, allows us to touch the unseen world of God so that what was not a reality becomes a reality, and what is not yet before us, we know is there.

The word that is used here for substance [ὑπόστασις] is difficult to translate in contemporary English. It's a classical Greek term that really is just translated "substance" or "essence" or "reality". Uh, it means the underlying reality which causes something to come about, be what it is. The underlying reality that causes something to come about and be what it is.

And see, nearly everything in your life is the result of faith. Some of you believe that you are going to get a bachelor's degree from Azusa Pacific University, and you haven't yet got it. Anyone here like that? Ok, we got a

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few people like that. Now nearly all of you are actually going to get that degree. And what is going to bring that degree into reality is your confidence that you will get it. That is what will bring it into reality. Your confidence will act together with everything else involved to bring it to pass. And if you didn't believe that, it wouldn't happen. And that is true of faith.

Faith in God brings into reality what would not otherwise be. And here I have to jump right over to prayer and say a thing or two about it, because one of the greatest hindrances to prayer is people don't really believe it makes any difference. Most folks even think it's a little bit blasphemous to suggest that God would do something just because you ask him. Isn't he good, isn't he already going to do what's good if you don't ask him? If you do ask him, will it make any difference? See, many people have this idea that God is this great, boring, cosmic stare. Just unblinkingly, unblinkingly looks at all of everything, never moves.

You think God has an interesting life? When I get done reading some theology books, I, you know, I think I've got a new proof of his infinitude... he would just go out of existence from boredom if what he said was true. Hmm? You see, faith means that we are tying up with an interactive God who is big enough not to stare at everything all the time. He doesn't have to stare at everything all the time. If he wants not to stare at something, he doesn't have to stare at it. If he wants to put you or me in charge of something, and hold us responsible for it, like any good administrator would do, he can do that. Those of you in administrative positions, try staring at the people who are working under you constantly. Hmm? The result will not be good. Some of you may have had parents who did that; and a lot of our problem comes from, we think of God as a cosmic parent. We have to remember that most parents are just hanging on by their toenails. God is *not* hanging on by his toenails. He's big enough to make it interesting. He's big enough to give *you* responsibility. And to let you fail. And to step in and redeem. And to act with you as a loving, powerful, wonderful person who is so great that it's easier for him to exist than not exist.

That's why faith is the substance of things hoped for. Now you know, when you pray in faith, and it emerges out of nothing, oft times you wonder, "Am I dreaming?" And I've had that experience, you know. You say, "I don't know if I believe this or not!" Sometimes the prayers that seem most answered for me are prayers where I don't particularly feel anything. A few weeks ago I, I prayed for a young man who had been delivering a summons. He was a long-time friend who had been delivering a summons and you know people don't always greet you warmly. And this person, who was a doctor I think, actually ran over his ankle with his car and broke it. So I prayed for him.

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Now the report comes back, the doctor says, "Well, it's, we weren't expecting this, but the damage is somehow regressing." Somehow regressing. God works that way. It was, how could this, maybe it was a coincidence. Maybe there's something else. You see, that one of the things about prayer that you learn is, when you begin to pray and God begins to answer, your main temptation will be to explain those things away. And if you do that, you're probably going to have several dry periods when you're not going to see any coincidences. God begins to call that which is not, as though it were, in response to your faith.

Let me tell you another thing about faith. Very important to understand. Faith is not a kind of qualification for an answer. Hebrews 1:6 tells us that they who approach God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. And one of the things that really freezes us is a misunderstanding of faith according to which God takes it as a personal favor if we believe in him. Hmmm? So that when you come to pray, God sort of inspects your mind, and he says, "Wow! There's faith there." And then, zowie, you hit the jackpot. You got it. See, and many, and many other junctures of our lives today, I'm afraid we take faith as though it were a work of righteousness.

And faith is not a work of righteousness. Faith is a reality that has its causes and its effects. Faith is not magic; it's not mumbo-jumbo; it's not some special little shining thing in your mind. Right? Faith is a confidence that leads you to interact with reality in such a way that a result comes. Right?

When I have faith, and go turn on the switch to get the lights on, the lights don't come on because I have this wonderful thing called faith. The lights come on because my faith led me to act, and my action tied in to a system of reality, and that brought a result.

Now of all the things I have to say to you tonight, as far as I'm concerned, what I'm talking to you about now is the most important. Well, I see people just tear themselves to pieces trying to have this marvelous little qualification, which will shake the goodies down from heaven. And folks, it isn't like that. It isn't like that at all. Your confidence in a fellow worker is not some qualification which, because they like, they cooperate well with you. Your confidence and faith in a fellow worker causes you to interact with a fellow worker in a certain way, obviously it involves an attitude toward them and all of that, but it's the whole relation that brings the response.

Faith is not some kind of qualification. That's why, often, it's very imperfect faith that brings the answer, because the imperfection of the faith did not

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prevent a stumbling, blundering action which resulted in someone being thrown upon the reality of God. It is the action in response to faith that shows the reality of God coming into our lives. It's when we act, when we move. So many folks will not pray, I know it's true—I teach, I deal with pastors who have been pastors for years who are scared to pray for someone to be healed. They're scared to pray for almost anything except the routine sorts of things that everybody prays about, anyone and no one expects to happen. And they are scared because they are thinking in their mind, "What's that going to show about me if no answer comes? It will undermine my authority. What will people think of me?"

Now see, a person who is in that position is not in a position to pray. They need to repent. They're not in a position to pray. They're wrapped up in their ego to such an extent that when they think of prayer, they think only of me. Hmmm? See, prayer is fundamentally an act of love. When we love people enough, we pray for them, and 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. And we cry out to God because of our love. We cry out in the imperfection of our understanding. We cry out in a context in which we don't know what to do. We don't believe we can do it. We don't understand God, and yet we cry out in prayer because love impels us.

When we love enough, even if we don't have faith, we'll pray. You see, we have to be turned outside of ourselves and opened up. Opened away from ourselves. "Humble yourself under the hand of God," the song we sang, you see. Getting outside of ourselves in prayer. Stepping forward for what is bigger than we can manage. Pulls us into the world of God. Not because we qualify, but because we have *moved* toward God. And you know, the stories are full of people who don't know what they believe, who don't understand, but they come to Jesus Christ, and he honors in their awkward, fumbling ways the simple reliance of faith, the desperation sometimes of faith.

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

1.) God is Here

There are three things that are the content of the faith of Jesus Christ. That is, there are three things that we believe when we have the faith of Jesus Christ. Very quickly, three things.

One is, "God is here." God is here. God is not far away; he is here. The message of Jesus Christ is, "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand." That means it's here. It doesn't mean it's about to be here, or it was about to be

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here, or something of that sort; it means it's here. It's like you're walking down the hall here and you say, "Turn, for the auditorium is at hand." That's what it's about. It isn't about something that is going to happen; it's about something that has already happened in the person of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven draws near and is available. God is here. Heaven is not far away; heaven is where your head is. That's the Biblical conception of heaven. Heaven starts right here.

When we say, "Our father who art in heaven", we're not saying, "Our father who art far away in space and time." But that's what it means to most people because they think of heaven in that way. The prayer means, "Our father always near us." Always near us. I don't have time to give you an exposition of the Old and New Testament concepts of heaven, the God of heaven. I beg you to study it. God is here. God is not at a distance. The person who says, "Well, I prayed and my prayers didn't get to the ceiling," meaning they didn't get to God, just got it all wrong. Because God is *below* the ceiling. He's not above the ceiling. He's below the ceiling. God is here.

2.) God is Able

[37:45]

Secondly, God is able. There is nothing too hard for God. Nothing too hard for God, because God holds everything together anyway. Nothing is too hard for God. Whether it's a medical problem, a problem with financial or other circumstances, personal relationships, business relationships. Nothing is too hard for God. And all of the things that we think are too hard, when we learn to pray, we learn to see them strangely melt and reconfigure and change their form when God steps in. And there is nothing too hard for God because he is the one who holds everything together anyway. The first chapter of Colossians tells us that in Jesus Christ all things stand together. Are formed; hold together. There isn't any thing that isn't already under the control of God. And he can come in, and he can change it.

Now if you're a physicist, or a chemist, and you're looking for the laws by which you could do it, you've got a different problem. God doesn't have that problem. It's hard for us; it's not hard for God.

3.) God is Good

[39:00]

And the third thing is, God is good. God is good. Listen, you know, in the first chapter of John, in the fifth ver...in **the first chapter of 1 John**, excuse me—left one "first" out there—the first chapter of 1 John, the fifth verse, John, the old apostle who spent his years with Jesus on the earth, and

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then many years after Jesus was no longer here in bodily form, working with him, here's what he said. He said, "We touched him with our hands, we heard him, we handled him. We were in fellowship with him. And we want you to have fellowship with him just like we have fellowship." And then he says, in verse five, "This is the message we heard of him." Now stop a moment, and ask yourself, if you had to tell someone what was the message of Jesus Christ, what would you say it is? Don't answer it, just think about it. What would you say it is? Here's what John said it is: "This is the message we heard of him. God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all, none." There's *nothing* bad about God. Don't believe anything bad about God.

And now this really goes very deep, and when we begin to listen to people talking about God, what we realize is, that many folks believe a lot of bad things about God. So don't believe anything bad about God; God is good. **Nahum 1:7**, in the context of a horrendous situation, says, "God is good. A stronghold in the day of trouble. And he keeps his mind on those who respect and fear him." Keeps his eye on them.

2 Chronicles 16:9: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are fixed on him." Now see, you're struggling with that problem. I sense, I look at your faces and I know honestly many of you say, "That really can't be true." And I want to go back and say, if you're really feeling that, that's not a condemnation of you. You've got a problem with it. It's not a condemnation. But you need to be able to be honest with it. We need to be able to deal with the doubts which well up in ourselves and say, "Well, if God is good, why does so-and-so, and so and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so?" And the first step in dealing with it is to be honest with it. But many people cannot pray the prayer of faith because they do not believe God is good. They don't believe God is good.

So what is the will of God? God's will is anything that's good. Find something that's good and pray for it. Someone says to me, "Well, maybe it's God's will that airplane crashed." Don't believe it. Don't believe it. God doesn't crash airplanes. Somebody does, but God doesn't. God doesn't will bad things to happen. I know I'm challenging a lot of your assumptions here now. Ok? That's why I'm here. If I was just going to come and say what you already believe, what's the point? What's the point?

And if you've got serious doubts about whether or not God is in favor of good things, whether it's for you or for others, you've got a problem about God. And you need to hear the message, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all."

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Theoretical Faith not Practical Faith

[43:00]

One more distinction with faith. You see, lots of us have theoretical faith, but we don't have practical faith. We are complex beings, and it is possible that we actually believe things in our heads that our bodies don't believe. We actually believe them. Someone says, "What do you believe about this?" We don't have any hesitation about it. We believe there is a God. But our bodies are trained differently. Our bodies are trained not to act as if there were a God. See, when Peter said to Jesus, "I will not forsake you. I will not reject you. I will die with you.", he had it in his head. But he didn't have it in his body. He said, "Thou are the Christ!" He knew it in his head. It was a revelation from God; he had it in his head. But he didn't have it any place else.

You see, the mark of a person who believes theoretically is, the last thing they will think to do about it, is pray for it. That's the last thing, and after that point they will worry, and fret, and try everything else, and when everything else fails, they'll say, "Maybe we better pray." You know, the minister visits the husband in the hospital, and comes out and the wife is in the waiting room and says, uh, after a little small talk, "Well, perhaps we should pray." And she says, "Oh! Is it that bad?"

Practical faith is when you automatically pray, first thing. That's when you've got it in your bones. You pray first. Then you do everything you can, but you pray first. You don't do everything you can, and then send up a flag. See? Practical faith is where your body believes, your mouth moves in prayer, your hands move to God, first. And then you do everything you can. And you praise God when something happens. You see? That's the difference.

Here's what Paul says in **Philippians 4:6**: "Don't be anxious about anything; but in everything, with prayer and supplication..." (supplication is urgent prayer) "...prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God that passes understanding..." Let's translate it this way: the peace of God which you can't figure out. That's what it means. A peace of God which you can't figure out will set a guard around your mind and heart in Christ Jesus.

All of that anxiety, all of that fret, all of that anger that comes out of fear, and the need to control, you see, is gone. And there is a peace of God that settles over your heart and mind because of the vision of the reality of God. That's faith. That's faith. That's the prayer of faith. It is the prayer of faith when you come to the place that in the vision of God you are confident that the need will be met.

"Faith in Prayer"

Dallas Willard - Renovaré at APU, 2007 [52:12]

Now you get this faith by opening yourself actively and energetically to receive the word of Christ in 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 word of the gospel. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The word of God has a power in itself—that's the power by which you were reborn into the kingdom of heaven. You're reborn by the power of the word. You're given a new life by that. Open your heart and your mind, every area—you can begin to identify them by just asking yourself what are the things you're worried about. Begin to open that up, and begin to see Christ in that area. Receive the word of Christ, his gospel of the kingdom, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his kind of righteousness..." [Matthew 6:33] Do that by inviting Christ in, and allowing him to teach you how to live as he lived, to do what he did. Do that and open yourself up, and you'll begin to experience more and more the reality of the kingdom and your faith grows as you extend your faith from what you easily believe to what you believe with difficulty.

And as you put yourself out in the context of trust, in such a way that if God doesn't come through, you're hung, you will learn how God comes through. And you will move from faith to faith. From the faith you have to the faith you don't have yet, but you are in the process of getting.

And so we come back around now, to the end, and we ask ourselves the question, would we really like to have that kind of faith? And we say again, to have that kind of faith means: there's no life "as usual". Life as usual does not exist. You cannot have life as usual and tack a little faith on. Add a little God. Like the politicians do.

If you really want to have this kind of faith, you have to ask yourself the question, "What would I be willing to do to have it?" What would I be willing to do to have this kind of faith? Now that's where the heart begins to palpitate a little bit. Because now we're individually challenged. I'll tell you something very simple: if many Christians would devote a quarter of the time to growing their faith that they devote to learning to play tennis well, the land would be filled with spiritual giants. Hmmm?

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

Now, in a Renovaré associated conference, it's especially appropriate to raise that question. What are the things you are able and willing to do with your body that would make it a living sacrifice unto God and transform it so that your body believes what your mouth professes?

"Faith in Prayer"

Dallas Willard - Renovaré at APU, 2007 [52:12]

The simple version is, of course, follow Jesus. Just do the things he did. And you will learn, and your faith will grow, and that's what he calls us to, as his disciples. 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 and 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 at least collectively, even greater works than his. Because he has gone to the Father and has related us directly through his own person to the infinite resources of God.

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

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