

The Rewards Of Faith

I have given this message today the title of "The Rewards of Faith". And within those words is one of the most precious promises that God could give to us, the promise that if we will, through faith, believe and trust in Him, all manner of blessing and reward is possible for us.

Folks, our Lord Jesus, is a loving and giving God. And He has done everything that it will take to provide us with every blessing that we will ever need. And yes, many of those blessings do come to us whether we believe and trust in Him or not. But if we want to step on up closer to Him and receive even greater, special blessings from Him, then we will have a part that we must do, and that part is "faith". You and I must have faith in Him. And the more intentional our faith within us is, the more His blessings will flow out to us.

A verse of scripture that we have quoted often that speaks about this necessity for us to have faith is given to us in Hebrews chapter 11. Listen again to these simple words!

6 . . . without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

These are simple words. But, though simple, they are powerful. Here, God is assuring us that if we will place our faith in Him, then all manner of blessing is possible for us.

But may I again emphasize a very important truth contained within these few words. It is that the extent of God's blessings and His rewards is directly related to the fervor and the diligence with which we seek after Him.

That is so important, because unfortunately, as we look around us at the body of believers within our churches today, we will find a very diverse group of people. Some are very diligent and very intentional in their "faith" as they seek after the Lord. But others seem barely more than spectators.

But that is not so with these dear folks that we have been reading about here in the Book of Luke. The woman that we studied about last week who had a continual flow of blood, a lifelong illness that she struggled with daily, was willing to do most anything to find relief. And with great faith, thought if only she could

touch the hem of His garment, she could be healed. She sought Jesus with all her heart.

And now here today, this Ruler of the local synagogue whose daughter was so sick, she was about to die, He sought Jesus with a fervor. He was in need, and He had a diligent faith.

Let's turn there to verse 40 of Luke chapter 8 and read about this dear man.

⁴⁰ Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. ⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, ⁴² for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.

As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. ⁴³ And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.

⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me." ⁴⁷ And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

⁴⁹ While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher."

⁵⁰ But when Jesus heard *it*, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well." ⁵¹ When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. ⁵² Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." ⁵³ And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead.

⁵⁴ But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." ⁵⁵ Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given *something* to

eat. ⁵⁶And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened. (Luke 8:40-56)

Folks, let me remind us that these precious blessings that Jesus promises to those of us who have faith and diligently seek Him are a provision of grace, “grace”, a free and unmerited gift from Him to us. And we must understand that those words that I read to us a moment ago from Hebrews 11, words that promise us that God will “reward” those of us who diligently seek Him, do not in any way imply that we merit His grace by our behavior. His “grace” is ever and always free and unearned by us.

And let me take a moment to remind us about some of the blessed provisions of “grace” that we spoke about last week. In that message we reminded ourselves that God’s grace comes to us essentially in two ways. One, through “common grace”, that kind of grace that most often flows first through the hands of people, doctors, policemen, governmental leaders and the like. And God’s “common grace” can be received and enjoyed by all men and women regardless of whether or not they have faith and believe in Him. Those words again that are given in Matthew chapter 5 verse 45,

⁴⁵ . . . He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:45)

God’s “common grace” is very subtle and is often received by people without them recognizing that it came from God. They simply receive and enjoy its benefits and then go on their way ascribing its source to some coincidence of nature, or to some person, perhaps the doctor, who gave it. And again, common grace requires little or no faith at all.

But not so with the other form of grace, “special grace”! “Special grace” is the kind of grace that comes directly from God’s own hands, the kind of grace that Jesus showed to all those He healed from their sickness and demon possession. And unlike common grace that requires little or no faith at all, special grace does require faith, sometimes great faith.

And we see the necessity of faith being spoken about time and time again as Jesus went about healing the sick and driving out demons. And it was so with these two people we are reading about here today, first with the woman who was healed from the flow of blood. She had only to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment and she was healed. And Jesus said to her. Verse 48,

⁴⁸ . . . “Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.” (Luke 8:48)

And then next with Jairus as he pleaded with Jesus to save his dying child, Jesus ⁵⁰ . . . answered him, saying, “Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.”(Luke 8:50)

Jesus told him, “only believe”, have faith and your beloved daughter will be made well.

I must confess to you that as I read these words and other words like them, it all seems so very simple, Jesus doing His part, speaking and touching and healing people, and then the people doing their part, having simple faith. But unfortunately, as we know, it's not simple at all.

Yes, Jesus is who He is, and He does His part perfectly well. He is truly the Almighty and Omnipotent God who spoke the whole world and everything in it into existence.

And so, as he walked among these people doing wonderful and miraculous things, it was simply Him exercising His great and mighty power and love.

But the people's part, our part of the equation, the simple requirement that we believe, that we have and exercise believing faith is not easy at all, especially not as easy for us as it might seem that it was for these dear people that we read about here. I know that we each do want to believe and to have a strong faith. But too often, perhaps most often, we fall short.

May I suggest that we start to remedy our lack of faith by doing two things. First, in Romans chapter 10, God tells us the first step necessary to the increase of our faith. There God tells us . . .

¹⁷ faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
(Romans 10:17)

This is such a simple, but such a profound truth. You and I need to regularly immerse ourselves within the words of truth in these scriptures. And as we do, we need to “listen” carefully, and truly “hear” the truths that we read.

And then next, I believe that for myself, it might be as simple a matter as that of “training”, training of my mind and heart and soul.

Unfortunately for me, and I do fear also for you, in the first many years of my salvation, my faith was barely enough to get me saved. My habits and behaviors changed slowly, and very little. I simply responded to the matters of my day in much the same secular way that I had been taught all my life before I was saved. I considered the matters in front of me, made logical and rational choices and then went on about my business.

With my rational intelligence available to me, it seldom occurred to me to turn to the new faith I had found.

In matters of my health, when I got sick, like most everyone else I knew, I simply went to the doctor, or I at least took whatever medication I could find in the medicine cabinet.

And for the most part, those doctors and those medications relieved my suffering, so I went on about my way. That was training! Day after day, doing the same thing trains a person to believe that we need only to depend upon the remedies provided through the secular world. And unfortunately, we can live out our entire Christian life never knowing that God would like for us to do something else.

And is not that a very clever subtlety. We grow up almost oblivious to the many other special provisions of grace that God wants to shower upon us. I have no doubt that such subtlety comes directly from the hands of the devil. He simply keeps our attention off of God. And although as believers satan can't really recapture our souls, through distraction, he can at least keep us from a deeper intimacy and dependence upon God that real faith provides.

Thankfully, in recent years, long after I first accepted Christ as my Savior, this matter of faith, especially as it relates to my health and my finances, has been drawn to the forefront of my considerations, no doubt by the Spirit of God.

And I do understand that to be God's way. He often needs to bring us along slowly and carefully. It is only as our minds and hearts are more and more surrendered to His plan, that He offers us more opportunities for faith.

And I want to emphasize here that I do not consider God's decisions to draw us further into faith to come from any wisdom or maturity on our part. To think such thoughts would surely come from pride or from some other boastful source.

No, I believe that God's decision to draw us on further into faith comes solely from our "surrender". And even our ability to surrender is a gift from the Holy Spirit. But when, and as, you and I do surrender ourselves into God's hands, it is then that He begins to "part the waters" and to invite us on into His blessed "promise rest".

Just as it took the Levite priests placing their feet into the Jordan River to make its waters part, so too does it take your and my first step of surrendered faith to begin to draw us into that next level of faith that God speaks about here in His word.

And again, let me repeat, it is "faith" that God is looking for on our part, faith that is willing to believe and faith that is willing to suffer if necessary, but faith and faith alone. That is our part of the equation and without it, without faith, we cannot please God.

Those words in Hebrews chapter 11 beginning with verse 1,

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

And then again in verse 6,

⁶ . . . without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Faith is our part in our relationship with Christ. With faith, we can do things that we could not otherwise imagine. But without faith, we can do nothing.

Here in our scripture text, we see two people exercising faith. One, the woman, exercised faith believing that if she could only touch the hem of Jesus' garment, she would be healed. And it was true.

Again, Jesus always had the power to heal, but it seems that it took the second part of the equation, her faith, to bring her healing to fruition. It took her faith to

provoke her to seek after Jesus, to reach out through the crush of the crowd and to touch His garment.

Would this woman have been healed had she shown a lesser faith? Perhaps, but perhaps not! Just as we are told here in Hebrews 11:6, faith, believing faith, strong believing faith, diligent seeking faith pleases God.

This dear woman's "diligent seeking" after Jesus pleased God and she was rewarded for her faith.

And there is also another, very special, dimension of faith that is being shown to us here in these two people.

In the woman, it was faith for her own needs that brought about the healing. But with Jairus, it was his faith for the benefit of his daughter. Their faith "pleased God", and Jesus honored both of them with healing.

Think with me about this for a moment. If Jairus' faith could bring about the healing, yea even the raising of his daughter from the dead, then perhaps our faith can reach out, beyond our own needs, and can draw upon the blessings of God for the benefit of some of our loved ones. Perhaps our faith can bring about the healing or even the salvation of our own daughters or sons, or husband or wife, or anyone else. Is not that a wonderful thought?

Faith on behalf of another person has been the cry of many a mother and father throughout time. And it is the right thing to do. We know that to be true because that is the desire of God's own heart, to do things for the benefit of others. And it all comes about through faith, believing faith.

My question for you today is, "do you already have this kind of faith? If, like me, you do not, then where should we begin?"

A few moments ago, I mentioned that some of our difficulty in having a strong believing and diligent faith could be as simple as our having trained ourselves wrongly. We have developed habits of seeking our blessings and our relief from suffering from common and secular sources, perhaps borrowing money instead of allowing God to provide it. In matters of health, we have taken a pill or called the doctor.

Well folks, I want to retrain myself. I want to start being more intentional and more diligent in my efforts to seek the face and the hand of God to meet my needs. And yes, even with my personal efforts, I'll need the unction of the Holy Spirit to help and to guide me. But I really do want to begin to be more intentional with my efforts.

I want to be more patient as I ask God for His direction and guidance in matters of my finances, giving God some time to answer my prayers.

And I also want to be more patient in matters of my health. Yes, God can and does use my doctors to help me. But I want to be patient and to involve Him more in my decision making about my health difficulties.

And with all the many other matters taking place in my life, I especially want to look intentionally and diligently for God's obvious involvement and His flow of blessing.

Folks, I want to heed those words of Jesus to the synagogue leader, Jairus. I want to "not be afraid, and only believe."

Listen as I close! Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1,

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

And in Hebrews 11, verse 6,

⁶ . . . without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

And in Romans 10, verse 17

¹⁷ faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

Let's pray.