



Honing My Faith

Reaching Beyond our fear into our Faith

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,

for You are with me; Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD, forever.

(23rd Psalm)

Top of the morning to you guys as we come together again! So good to break bread and share life with guys who exude optimistic Hope in a world of bleak anxieties. Guys who love the Lord and see thru eyes of Faith and trust the Creator.

We are guys who are trying to walk our walk and talk our talk and demonstrate what life looks like, rooted in Christ, and motivated by the Love of God. The righteousness that we need, to have right standing before God and matched cadence with Him, comes only **through Faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3: 22)**. The apostle Paul explicitly highlighted Jesus Christ as the object of Faith by which God declares sinners righteous. Paul did not refer to Faith in general terms; he specifically linked Faith to the One who came to earth to save us from our sins. We confidently and totally put our trust in our Savior whose costly and decisive sacrifice paved the way to Salvation.

Our relationship with Him, our Union with Christ, carries the day. In a nervous society, we can *reflect His image to the world in ways that no one else can* (p.163). So, today we had planned on finishing chapter 8 or probing Mike's blog on anger/judgment. We decided, however, to examine the dilemma of the day, the coronavirus, assessing things thru the eyes of a Believer.

In a world, gripped by fear, we need to step up and trust Him in trials and demonstrate that God does not relieve us of Challenges. And they are just that: challenges and not excuses for stewing and wallowing in dread. I can confess to Him, 'Lord, I'm honestly scared;' or even repent as my Faith is waning. But I do so, knowing that this dilemma is an opportunity to worship and for **honoring my Faith**.

There are so many wonderful passages in the Scriptures that help us hone our Faith; indeed, to give us a foundation for Faith and the confidence to circumvent fear. *I sought the Lord, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears* (Psalm 34:4). Imagine that; Father even holds our hand: *For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."* (Isaiah 41:13) And our current author, Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ*, reminds us that if Christ is in us and if we are in Christ, then we have Love in us. We have been enabled to love others, and we are loved by our Creator; and with all that Love – there is no room for fear in our hearts *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* (1 John 4:18) We can put our Faith in Father God who loves us beyond measure. He is the One whom King David worships:

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.* (Psalm 23:4)



As God has said to us, *"do not worry"* (Luke 12: 22), and has also said, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Deuteronomy 31:8), and He also calls us *'His workmanship,'* (Ephesians 2:10), we see His command, His promise, and His goal. It is sin to worry (commandment), and it is His stated intent to carry us through any trouble (promise), and His stated goal is to make His children grow and trust in Him (goal). Therefore, worry is a sin of mistrust of God and His ability and intent. Why can't we trust God to be God and get the job done? Why can't we find Peace in His promises and rest in His objectives? What is there to fear?? Time to hone our Faith!!

Yes, it's time to **reach beyond our fear** into our Faith, when we are afraid, we need only to look back at how God has kept us up to this point in our journey. He has been, and will continue to be, faithful. Whether life is going perfectly (based on our temporal narrative) or we are in the midst of tragedy, we have a loving God that cares about us and is all-powerful. Remember what the Apostle Paul related to Timothy, *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly Kingdom. To Him be the Gory forever and ever. Amen.* (2 Timothy 4:18 ESV)

But occasionally, we hear a different voice. A voice that can be more than critical, a voice of defeat. It's the voice that tells us we're unworthy, unloved, and unwanted. It reminds us of our failures, of our deepest shames, and it can be unrelenting in its repetition. The voice that sounds a lot like satan can become ingrained into our identities. But we tend to forget the adversary is limited in the tricks he pulls against us, and our God is *unlimited* in His Mercy. The enemy tells us we are failures, but Jesus gives us victory, and reinforces this victory throughout Scripture. *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our Faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes Jesus is the Son of God.*" (1 John 5:4, 5) In times when we are grasped by despair and anxiety; it's time for honing our Faith. We're gonna be OK.

*In the dark of the midnight have I oft hid my face, while the storm howls above me, and there's no hiding place.
'Mid the crash of the thunder, precious Lord, hear my cry; keep me safe till the storm passes by.
Till the storm passes over, till the thunder sounds no more, till the clouds roll forever from the sky
Hold me fast, let me stand in the hollow of Thy hand; keep me safe till the storm passes by.*

*Many times satan whispered, "There is no need to try, for there's no end of sorrow, there's no hope by and by"
But I know Thou art with me, and tomorrow I'll rise, where the storms never darken the skies.
Till the storm passes over, till the thunder sounds no more, till the clouds roll forever from the sky
Hold me fast, let me stand in the hollow of Thy hand; keep me safe till the storm passes by.*

*When the long night has ended and the storms come no more, let me stand in Thy Presence on the bright peaceful shore.
In that land where the tempest, never comes, Lord, may I dwell with Thee when the storm passes by.
Till the storm passes over, till the thunder sounds no more, till the clouds roll forever from the sky
Hold me fast, let me stand in the hollow of Thy hand; keep me safe till the storm passes by.*

*The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our Faith!" And the Lord said,
"If you had Faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree,
'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you."
(Luke 17:5, 6)*



Let's go into prayer.

P.U.S.H. Pray Until Something Happens

Prayer: a passion for the Presence of God!



*Be joyful in Hope, patient in affliction, **faithful in prayer.** (Romans 12: 12)*

*Prayer is more powerful than all your self-efforts. Pray **big** and watch God work.*

When prayer becomes your habit – miracles become your lifestyle.

Thru prayer, we feel safe to reach beyond our fear and reunite with Faith. We can confess our worries and repent and be emboldened by the Holy Spirit.

Thru prayer, we hear God's voice, the voice of steadfast faithfulness, even as we feel His Presence. His comfort is palpable, and He offers Peace in turbulent times.

*We pray for relief from fear and anxiety and then just **watch them wash away.** Fear betrays me – but, honing my Faith emboldens me. In 1987, I prayed to a God who is bigger than cancer; now we can pray to a God who is much bigger than coronavirus.*

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

(Joshua 1: 9)

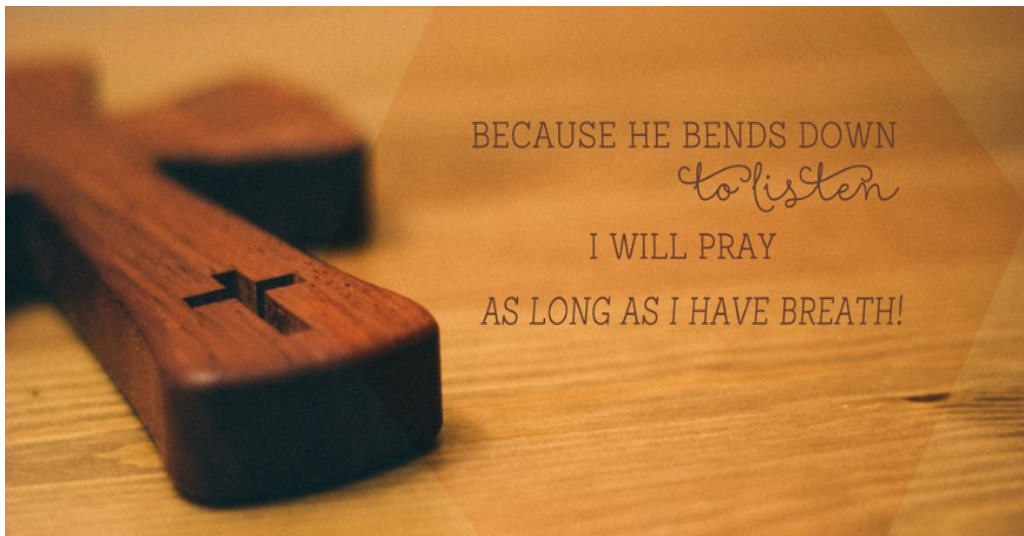


Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. (Luke 18: 1)

Prayer is our powerline.

Let us saturate everything we do in prayer.

Prayer is the intimate, honest expression of the soul's dependence on God.



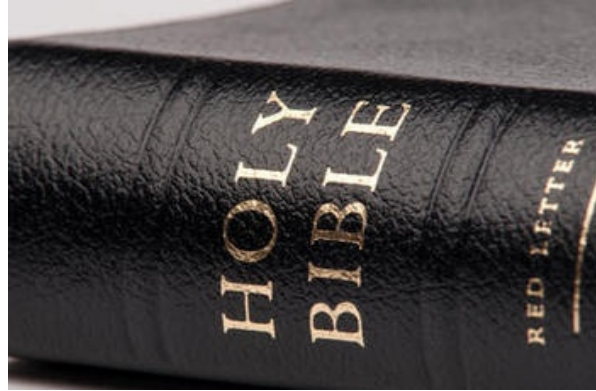
Who can you pray for today?

Who might God be putting in your path?

Call onto me, and I will answer thee. (Jeremiah 33: 3)

*In the morning, Lord, You hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait expectantly.*

(Psalm 5: 3)



Let's see what the guys are praying about this week.

Let the fragrance of our prayers arise



I constantly remember you in my prayers. (2 Timothy 1: 3)

God Sightings/God Residing

See God thru His amazing creation. Embrace God thru the work He is doing inside you.

Stop and consider God's wonders. (Job 37: 14)

***I believe in Christianity as I believe in the rising sun;
not because I see it, but by it, I can see all else. (C.S. Lewis)***

Last week, I shared about how our Pastor Josh related that, tiny gifts (as small as a mustard seed) can make a difference in life. A simple gesture like passing a quarter on at Aldi's really brightened one's life and created a rippling effect. Bright little moments of sunshine in an otherwise bleak parking lot. I noticed myself doing the same at the local YMCA. The gals who work the front desk and welcome people, spend much of their time doing the mundane task of folding towels. At the end of the counter

there is always a huge pile of unfolded towels and, when they are not busy, the ladies fold, fold, fold. On the way to the locker room, I always grab an unfolded towel. It's a tiny thing and only saves someone a second, but its her second. The appreciation is authentic and even the tiniest, little bright moment is still a God-sighting. Someone's day is just a little itty bit brighter and a smile is always cherished.

Uh oh! Another God-coincidence: as I drive to the 'Y' today, pondering what we discussed Saturday about our security in Christ -- what is Karl and Crew talking about on Moody radio: the same topic!! Let's listen in: *How do we, as Christians, overcome fear, and how do we witness in the midst of fear?? The global outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID – 19) is unnerving. Store shelves are being emptied of anything that might stave off the virus. (But we who believe) must remember the sovereignty and Love of God. **Our lives are entirely secure in Him.** We have a Savior who has brought us to life, and we will never die if we have surrendered our life to Christ. And this body we now have is just **a tarp** compared to what we get for eternity. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands (2 Corinthians 5: 1). **We will always battle sickness**, and one day we will all leave these 'tents' behind; but the future is brilliantly bright. We've been brought out of sin's darkness by God's Grace and into sweet friendship with the One who saves our soil. Rejoice! Realign your life with what matters most. These moments of fragility and uncertainty allow us to focus our energies on what's vital and lasting. Don't let this time slip by without allowing God to quiet your heart and reconnect with His call on your life. Let COVID – 19 cause you to reconsider what matters most. Make this your time to get your life realigned! In all things, be alert for your opportunity to help others and radiate while you do it. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give Glory to your Father who is in Heaven (Matthew 5: 16).*

God sightings stir us to worship. And I stand in awe of You.

Have you seen God, lately?



Focus on Faith

Faith is not a cushion for me to fall back upon – it is my working energy. (Helen Keller)

*It's not the strength of your Faith that saves you, but the strength of Him upon whom you rely.
(Charles Spurgeon, Pastor, author, 'Prince of Preachers')*

As Jesus was about to return to Heaven, He promised us the Holy Spirit who could dwell in the hearts of Believers ([John 14: 26](#)) and be part of the Triune God as well. We could put our Faith in Him as He is God the Holy Spirit.

*The Spirit provides us the motivation to live as Sons and daughters of God. He helps us understand the new creation that we become after Salvation. The Spirit can convict us of sin and **reveal to us the blind spots in our Faith**. He can also guide us to share the Gospel with others or help those in need. He provides motivation to live as Christ calls us to live. (Pastor Josh)*

We trust solely in the sufficiency of the One who lives within us. Even so, we still need to work on our fears regularly, as Paul wrote to Timothy: *For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you, through the laying on of my hands; for God gave us a Spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* (1 Timothy 1:7, 8)

If Timothy had to be told to '*fan into flame*' the spirit that is not fear, then he was in a state where the spirit within him was only **smoldering embers** which allowed fear to gain a toehold in his life. The flame of the Spirit of power and Love and self-control, which is the gift of God, needs to burn brightly to drive out fear; and this required Timothy to do something: *fan the flame!*

Faith is: to Hear ([Romans 10: 17](#)), to Believe ([Hebrews 11: 6](#)), and to Obey ([James 1: 22](#)) the Word of God ([Matthew 6: 33, 34](#)).

Faith is the currency of God's economy.

*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
(Isaiah 41: 10)*

Conclusion

*But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.
Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6: 33, 34)*

The events of our lives can change quickly. They may seem uncanny and abrupt, but when you find yourself struggling with feelings of anxiety or clutched by fear, first pray and seek Him, and bolster your Faith. Get together with other men of Faith and look up Scripture and encourage one another as we are accustomed to doing. I think that what I took away from today's talk was, when it comes to a virus, do the common-sense things (not always so common) take precautions and then put it all at the Cross. Trust Him in everything ([Proverbs 3: 5](#)) and go out and have a day. Enjoy the journey.

Here's some insight from Mike's blog: *Peace is the opposite of worry, and Peace overcomes worry as **surely as light makes the darkness flee**. A child of God who is growing in Peace is doing so because he is on that ancient Path of a corrected understanding of Who God Is, deciding what is true, and **proceeding through life in Faith**, under His care*

as we know Him. We lack Peace if we are afraid of the outcome under the Sovereign God – be it that we don't know what to expect from Him, or are afraid of His response, or believe that He isn't paying attention. However, if we are firm in our Biblical Faith of His character, ability, and intent – that He is good and loving, presides over all things, and seeks to preserve and grow our Faith in Him – then the only logical conclusion is not to worry but to have Peace in our Faith. This Saturday, we will finish chapter 8 and/or ponder the statement, 'all anger is preceded by judgment.' Come on down and we'll talk about it. You'll be glad you did! Your Bro. in Christ, Dale.

Breakfast Benediction

May you all be Blessed real good!

Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.

Make them known to your children and your children's children.

(Deuteronomy 4: 9)

The LORD bless you and keep you;

the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you Peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)

.....and may the dust of your Rabbi's feet cover your clothing.

I put my Hope in You, I lay my life in the palm of Your hand.

I'm constantly drawn to You Lord in ways I cannot comprehend.

It's the Creator calling the created, the Maker beckoning the made,

The bride finding what she's always waited for, when we find ourselves that day.

In You, where the hungry feast at the table, the blind frozen by colors in view,

The lame will dance, they'll dance for they are able, and the weary find rest,

Oh, the weary find rest in You.

It's no secret that we don't belong here, those set apart by the Grace of You.

And we look for the day when we go to a place, where the old becomes brand new.

In You, where the hungry feast at the table, the blind frozen by colors in view,

The lame will dance, they'll dance for they are able, and the weary find rest,

Oh, the weary find rest in You.

We'll find Hope. O we will find rest.

You're our every view, You're our sanctuary.

We come before You, Lord.

In You, where the hungry feast at the table, the blind frozen by colors in view,

The lame will dance, they'll dance for they are able, and the weary find rest,

Oh, the weary find rest in You.



*We are hard pressed on all sides, but **not crushed**; perplexed, but **not in despair**;
persecuted, but **not forsaken**; struck down, but **not destroyed**. (2 Corinthians 4: 8, 9)*