

Weakness in Faith **03-11-18 AM**

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Hebrews 10:35-36

Faith (*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* – Hebrews 11:1) has a particular design. It is not given to us by God, but is our reaction to what God has given us – Grace (Romans 10:17). Therefore, the measure of our faith is to the effort we put into growing it. Faith is designed to enable us to overcome difficult times in life (1 Thessalonians 5:8, James 1:1-3). Yet for many, it is precisely in difficult times that their faith is damaged or destroyed. Why is this? It is because many do not understand that faith is grown BEFORE difficulties, not during them. Faith is called a breastplate; does one put on their armor after the battle has begun, or before? Faith is comparable to a fortress wall; is the wall built before or during a siege? Faith should be strong before we are tested; when we are tested, it is the weaknesses in faith that are revealed.

EVERYONE IS WEAK SOMETIMES

Weakness in faith appears when we are under trial/testing/tribulation, or when we are self-examining. Such moments occur to everyone. In Matthew 11:3-9, John the Baptist (whom Jesus said in verse 11 was the greatest man born of a woman) sends message to Jesus asking Him if He is the “One”, the Messiah. It is strange, since John had been telling people that Jesus was the One for some time (John 1:29-30). A very likely answer for this seeming contradiction is that John, at the end of his life and facing execution, is having a moment of doubt. Jesus does not rebuke John, nor does He directly answer John. Instead, He remind John of what is written in Scriptures and what he has seen; in other words, the very same evidences we are compelled to use today.

If the greatest man/preacher/prophet could have a moment of weakness in faith, then we understand that we can as well. And if Jesus did not accuse him of failure, then we might understand that having weaknesses in faith are not failures, but opportunities to grow. Perhaps this is why James said that it is a good thing when faith is tested (James 1), or why Paul said that his weakness was to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 12).

WHY ARE WE WEAK

Sometimes we are weak in faith because our faith is in the wrong things. Scriptures say that we need to have a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5), which is a faith in the genuine things of God. In contrast, we often fail because we put faith in the wrong things. Faith should not be in yourself (1 Timothy 6:20-21), because you will fail at some point, and it is a great discouragement if that is where we placed our faith. Faith should not be in our circumstances, such as our health and wealth (1 Timothy 6:10-11), because those are things which will fade away. We are even making a mistake to put our faith in the (local) church or brethren; both are filled with human frailty and weakness, and are likely to harm us.

Sometimes we are weak because we are walking by sight, and not by faith. Faith is a way of living life (2 Corinthians 5:7). We know this is true, but we may not be living it clearly. Are we walking by sight? When we are making decisions based on what is best for our physical needs (consider your job, your family, etc), then we are not walking by faith. IF we are seeking the physical way to perfection, then we are not walking by faith. If we look around in the world, and we are despairing by what we see coming in the future, then we are not walking by faith.

Sometimes we are weak in faith because we are listening to our heart. The bible repeatedly warns us of the great deception of emotions (Jeremiah 17:9, Proverbs 14:12). Faith is weakened when we listen to self-doubt and down talk both from within and without. It is weakened when we do the opposite as well, boasting to ourselves and lifting ourselves up. Our emotions are not real; they do not reflect the reality around us, and are often simply a reaction to limited facts.

Sometimes we are weak in faith because the other two pillars of faith are weak: Hope and Love (1 Corinthians 13:13). In Hebrews 10:22-24, we are told that these three things are necessary to be something we keep within ourselves in order to endure to the end (vs. 35-36). Our faith will be weak if our hope is weak; if we are not looking for our reward, then the value of our faith is diminished. Our faith will be weak if our love for God and our brethren is weak; we cannot make faith real without love.

SOLUTIONS

In Revelation 2, God warns the church in Ephesus that they have left their first love. Jesus does not explain what that means, but perhaps we can suggest it is a weakness of faith. He tells them that they need to “remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first”. That is a good rule for weak faith. We need to remember why we believed in the first place, repent of our weakness (by acknowledging it and desiring to change it), and do the deeds we did at first.

However, our walk of faith is not something we do alone. Changing ourselves often requires the assistance of our fellow citizens in the kingdom (Galatians 6:1-2). We need to be open to the need to confess our weaknesses (James 5:16). We need to see that doubt is NOT a sin; we saw this earlier with John the Baptist, but we can also see it in John’s spiritual forbear Elijah in 1 Kings 19. God does not demand that we accept all things without question; in fact, God welcomes questions (Acts 17:11).

CONCLUSION

We all have weak moments. We need to build and strengthen our faith **BEFOREHAND**, otherwise we may be broken. If we are weakened or broken, we need to act to restore ourselves. Finally, we are not alone; we need to use God’s family to build ourselves up.