

By Faith

Scripture: Hebrews 11:29 – 12:2 & Isaiah 5:1 - 7

The title of this message is 'By Faith', they are two very powerful words! They defy the impossible when we practice them. The Book of Hebrews remind us of the mind boggling feats performed by God's power when helpless people chose to believe in him in spite of the perils which they found themselves.

Boy, did this idea hit me considering today world! 'By Faith' – they are truly powerful words! They can bring us out of this difficult time with a world pandemic taking so many lives. They can bring our nation out of this time of great division within it. It is mind boggling that by faith in God and Jesus Christ that we can perform great miracles. In spite of our perils that we find ourselves in, we can be saved by faith!

Unforeseen crises, natural disasters, and other disruptive events may cause Christians to ask – *Where is God in all this?* Maybe a better question today is – *Where is my faith in God in all this?*

In all the examples in our scripture passage, heroes and heroines had personal experiences with the God of Israel who gave them victories. Their personal interactions with God sustained them. Their testimonies were heard and others followed. Their witnessing gave them the kind of faith that honored God so much that God was honored to do the impossible for them and their people.

Faith is built by knowing God through Jesus Christ. Just as we get to know people through mundane interactions, we may also get to know our Lord. Authentic conversations in and outside of prayer brings a closeness to the heart of God that increases our faith.

The Holy Spirit will illuminate scripture in a way that not only will we understand it, but our eyes will be open to see its truth in action in the world. We will see evidence that God's promises are trustworthy. When impossible situations emerge, as they often do, we can stand on what we have learned of and from God. When overwhelming worry comes our way, we can call on God to give us peace while he works out the problem for our good.

By faith, we will trust the Most High for the outcome which will honor God. By faith, we can know that God always acts out in love when we honor him.

At times, we grow weary especially during these dark times with over 200,000 dead from a virus and great division within our country. If we remind ourselves of what God has already done for us, God will revive our faith. If we recognize what God has already done for us, God will restore our faith.

Our God, is a God of second chances, so let us gather up a second wind that we need to keep running by faith!

In our second scripture reading from the Book of Isaiah we have the Lord as a loving gardener who planted and cared for a vineyard. The Lord provided everything the vines needed to flourish. God provided everything so that the vines would bear healthy wine grapes. But in spite of all this extravagant care and provision, the vines strangely bore rotten grapes!

And so with the people of Israel, God blessed them with loving care. God made them a numerous people and empowered them with generations of prosperity but they forgot about their heavenly benefactor. The people of Israel ultimately turned against God. They bore bad grapes! Because of this, God removed their protection they once enjoyed and they fell on hard times.

Such punishment can be avoided when we choose not to be distracted by personal gain but remember who God is in our lives. Such bad grapes can be avoided if we strive to lead a life pleasing to God.

Many of our values that we uphold are similar to those held by the people back then. We often strive for power and material possessions at the expense of the poor or weak.

If we live by the teaching of Jesus, we are living by faith. If we live moral lives when it seems that is not profitable, we live by faith. When we consider others above ourselves, we live by faith. When we create a system that protects and empowers the helpless, we live by faith. This is a strange concept to many people, but it should not be strange to us if we live by faith!

Living according to Christ's teaching is what God requires of us, in spite of the fact that we will find ourselves in conflict with those who do not agree with our lifestyle choices. We must live by faith!

Let us pray:

God of the heavenly forces, look down upon us from heaven and save us. Attend to our vines and may they be rooted in faith in you.

Let your hand be upon us and when we turn away from you, revive us so that we can call on your name.

Restore us, O Lord, and make your face shine upon us.

Dear Wonderful Lord, we thank you for this time together. Let us see you every day and let us remember your love and power in our actions in this world. It is in the name of Christ that we pray – AMEN.