

Pastor Chuck Smith's Last Sermon - Be Strong in the Faith

by Chuck Smith

The key to faith is to be strong in the faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what God has promised, He is able to perform.

Duration: 26:56

Scripture: 2 Kings 7, Jeremiah 32:27, Matthew 19:26, Romans 4:19, Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 10:23, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Gods Promises"

Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of faith and not staggering at the promises of God, using the example of Abraham's unwavering belief in God's promise of a child despite seemingly impossible circumstances. It emphasizes the need to praise God and trust in His ability to fulfill His promises, even before seeing any evidence of them coming to pass.

Transcript

Good morning. Oh, bless you. Thank you.

Good morning, good morning. What a joy, what a blessing to gather with you again today. Looking forward to what the Lord has in store for each of us as we are waiting together upon him.

You may be seated and grab your anvil and let's sing our first hymn. Father, we thank you for your word and the opportunity that we have now of studying your word. We pray, Lord, that you'll teach us what this justification by faith is all about, not from the law, but Lord, through our trusting in your promises and in your word.

Blessed, we pray, Lord. Open now our hearts, speak to us. In Jesus' name, we thank you for it.

Amen. You may be seated. Romans chapter 4, beginning with verse 19, he's talking about the subject of faith, not weak in the faith, and he gives his keys to faith.

So the key is, not being weak in faith, he didn't consider his own body now dead, which was about a hundred years old, Abraham at this time. Neither did he consider the deadness of Sarah's womb. Secondly, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what God had promised, God was also able to perform.

First of all, the negatives. He did not consider his own body now dead when he was a hundred years old. You know, when we are looking at the promises of God, so often the first thing we consider are the difficulties or the improbabilities.

We're prone to categorize things as, well, that's easy. Well, that's average. Well, that's difficult.

Well, that's impossible. And we often carry over our abilities to God. And so, if it's easy for us, surely it must be easy for God.

If it's difficult for us, it must be difficult for God. And if it is impossible for us, well, don't even bother, because it's probably impossible for him also. But Jesus said, with God, all things are possible.

The prophet Jeremiah said, I am God. Is there anything too hard for me? Difficulty must always be measured by the capacity of the agent that is doing the work. And if God is the agent doing the work, any talk of difficulty has to be observed.

I mean, you can't say, well, that's a hard one for God, or that's difficult for God, because he's the agent doing the work which limits any thought of difficulty. When I'm facing a rough situation, a financial problem, and all, I usually, in my mind, try to figure out how I can get myself out of this financial maze. And generally, I usually think, well, the readers digest content.

You know, I'm a finalist then. So, it's exciting to wait to see if they get my number this year. They missed every year so far.

But, you know, one of these years, any day. And so you think, well, you know, I'll just wait, and they'll pull my number, and all of my financial problems will be over with one number being drawn back there, and wherever they draw them. And so, my prayer often then becomes what I call direction prayers.

I begin to pray, Lord, direct them to my number. Let them draw my number, Lord, when they pull out that magic number to give this great reader's digest sweepstake to the winner of the country. But, unfortunately, it hasn't happened yet, and I'm getting to that place where I'm not really putting much chances on it happening from now on.

But, you see, what has happened is that my prayer has turned, gradually, from a direct prayer, and that is, Lord, thank you for promising to supply all of my needs. And it's direction prayer. I'm telling him how to supply all of my needs, and use the reader's digest sweepstakes as her instrument in supplying my needs.

But, you know, God doesn't always follow my directions. Now, it seems to me it would be a very simple thing to do, but yet, he doesn't seem to want to follow my directions on how to do things. He does them very proficiently, and he does them very well, but he doesn't do them the way I have ordered them to be done.

And the danger with that is that if he's not following my specific orders, I have a tendency to say, well, he just doesn't answer prayer. I told him to do it like this, he's not doing it like that. And that's the idea that God does not answer prayer.

But, there's another problem. And, you know, when you're looking at your situation, looking at your problems, you try to figure out a way by which God might be able to meet that need. And so, you get your mind all made up, well, God can do this, maybe do that, and do it this way, and that could all come to

pass.

But, again, he's just, as I said, not good at following our directions. So, with Abraham, he didn't consider his own age, 100 years old. He set that aside.

Nor did he consider the deadness of Sarah's womb, the fact that she had not been able to be pregnant through the 90 years or so that they had been married. And so, he just set that out, and that wasn't even a part of the considerations. So, Abraham has a double problem.

He's impotent, and Sarah has a womb that just will not conceive. She's gone through the change of life. And, actually, Abraham has also become impotent.

And, thus, the human possibilities of their having a child are greatly diminished. But, yet, in spite of this, it's said that they staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief. So, here they had the promises of God.

God said to Abraham, through Sarah shall you see equal. And, they had this promise of God that it would come through Sarah, the child. And, so, they didn't stagger at this.

Now, let me ask you a question. How often have you found yourself staggering at the promises of God? I do quite often. The Bible says untouched are given exceeding rich and precious promises.

But, so often, I find myself staggering at those promises of God. There's an interesting story in the Old Testament, 2 Kings, and it is the siege of the city of Samaria by Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria. The famine had become so bad.

The city was in such dire straits that a jawbone of a donkey was selling for 80 pieces of silver. I don't know what you can get out of a jawbone of a donkey. Maybe boil it into some kind of a soup or something.

80 pieces of silver for a jawbone of a donkey. And, the king of Samaria was walking along the wall, and this woman called O-King. And, he said, what is it, ma'am? And, she said, help me.

And, he said, what would you like? She said, well, my neighbor and I, we made a pact. And, we were so hungry, we decided that we would eat our children. And, so, yesterday, we boiled my baby, and we ate it.

And, now, today, she has hid her child. Make her produce it so that we can eat it and have food for today. The king was so angry, but he was blaming, not the real problem, he was the problem, but he was blaming God.

And, he said, God do so to me and more also if I don't get the head of that prophet Elisha. And, so, he was determined that he was going to get Elisha's head because of this difficulty that this woman was going through. And, so, he sent his messenger down to Elisha's house to take his head off.

And, so, Elisha was an interesting kind of a character. He was that kind that God would speak to him. And, he would just, you know, he had quite a light with God.

The Lord could talk very clearly to him and very plainly. And, so, as Elisha was there, he would start up on these crazy things and say, Hmm, can't beat that. Oh, no.

And, you think, what's going on now? And, he'd go on with this for a little bit and then he would look in and say, Look what that son of a murderer is going to do now. He has sent a man down here to get my head. And, as soon as they knocked on the door, open the door, but hold the door tight and hold him tight.

Pin him with the door and hold him there because the king is right behind him. And, so, the fellow came to get the head of Elisha. And, sure enough, the king was right behind him.

And, so, they said, Okay, Elisha, you've had it. I've had all the problems with you. I'm going to take his hope.

Elisha said, King, I'm not the problem. You're the problem. And, it's because you've turned away from the Lord, the true and the living God.

And, he said, But, don't worry. Tomorrow, by this time, they'll be selling a bushel of fine flour for 65 cents right here in the gates of Samaria. The king said, If God should open windows in heaven, could such a thing be? He was staggering at the promise of God.

It was so great. Tomorrow, this time, selling for 65 cents in the gates of Samaria, a bushel of fine flour. If God would open windows in heaven, could such a thing be? The prophet said to him, You will see it, but you won't eat it.

Talking to the man who the king leaned upon, who had made this statement of unbelief. And, so, sure enough, that evening, there were four leprous men who were living outside of Samaria. And, they couldn't go into the city because they were unclean with their leprosy.

And, thus, they had to stay outside. But, they were really hurting by the fact that, you know, the people within the city were starving. Nothing was coming outside.

These men usually lived on the garbage heap outside of town. And, they survived off the garbage that was being thrown away. But, as we mentioned, garbage is being sold for premium prices.

Jawbone of a donkey for 80 pieces of silver. And, so, these people are just really hurting bad. And, so, one fellow said, King, I know where there's a horse that hasn't been eaten yet.

If you'll give me permission, I'd like to ride on this horse and see if I can find the Syrians. The king said, It's a trap. Don't let anybody out.

Keep everybody close in the city. They know how hungry we are. They've just pulled back.

And, as soon as we rush out, then they will turn and they'll turn on us. And, it'll be over for us. So, he said, Let me see if I can find them.

The king said, Okay, go ahead and search for them. So, this fellow got on the horse and he rode all the way down to the Jordan River, which was the borderline. And, all the way to the Jordan River, all he saw were clothes that had been discarded by the people wanting to run faster and get out of the area.

And, so, the man came back and said, It's true. There's not a single Syrian this side of the Jordan River. They've gone.

And, so, the king said to the one fellow who had made that jeering remark, If the Lord should open windows in heaven, let such a thing be. The king said to him, You go down and you make sure that they are marching out in orderly fashion. And, keep order for these people going to get this great supply of food that God has left.

Well, the people were so eager to get to the food, they stormed out of the city. And, this guy trying to stand there and keep them in some kind of orderly fashion was trampled to death. And, so, the word of the prophet was fulfilled.

He saw it, but he didn't eat it. So, we do read here concerning these keys to faith. Being strong in the faith, he gave glory to God.

This means that he was praising God before there was any evidence of the fulfillment of the promise of God. And, I think that is a real key to faith. Having confidence because God has promised it.

His promise is as good as the fulfillment. So, let's say that we could step into a time machine. Sarah dials on the time machine for 1900 B.C. And, we step off the machine in Hebron and we decide to walk to Beersheba.

Just outside of Beersheba, there is this expansive tent, many flocks grazing on the hillside. An old man sitting under an oak tree invites us to rest a bit in the shade and be refreshed to continue our journey. As he talks with us, every once in a while he stops and gives spontaneous praise.

We finally ask him, why is it that you are so happy? What is going on? It is obvious that you are very excited about something. And, he said, well, my wife, she is going to have a baby boy. Your wife? A baby boy? You are sort of old, aren't you? Yeah, I am 90.

Oh, yes. Well, how old is your wife? Oh, she is in her 90s. Well, how many children do you have? We don't have any children yet.

But, she is going to have a son? Yeah. Well, how long has she been pregnant? Well, she is not pregnant yet. We scratch our heads as we continue our journey on down to Beersheba.

The old man is happy. Don't disturb him. But, you see, he believed.

Not staggering at the promises of God, but being strong in the faith. He was giving glory to God. Thanking God.

And, I think this is a real key to faith. Thanking God for the promise. Before you see any evidence of the promise being fulfilled.

God has promised it. That is all we need. We have got unto us exceeding rich and precious promises.

That by these we are partakers of the divine nature. So, finally, we read, being fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able also to perform. The question is, can God do it? Is he able to supply your need? Is he able to meet your problem? Of course, you see, he is able.

God can do anything. Hang on to that. That is your first key to faith.

God can do it. And I want you to know today that God can do it. That is where you start.

And it goes from there until you come to the place where I know that God is going to do it now. And so, just hang on. Because God is faithful.

And he will keep his promise. He will keep his word. Father, we do thank you.

That we can put our trust and confidence in you. Knowing, Lord, that that which you have promised, you are able also to perform. And so, Lord, may we just put our faith, our confidence, our trust in you, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let's stand. The pastors are down here at the front.

To pray for you. Today you are in need of prayer. God is able.

And, you know, we just encourage you to give God a chance to work in your life. Whatever the need might be. God wants to work.

And God will work if you will just give him that chance to work in your life. The Lord bless thee. The Lord bless thee.

And keep thee. And keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee.

And be gracious unto thee. And be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up.

The Lord lift up. His countenance. His countenance.

Upon thee. And give thee.

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