

(People God Uses) 02 the Need for Faith

by Chuck Smith

Faith is necessary to please God, experience His power, and accomplish His purposes, and it is a gift of God, not of works, but of grace.

Duration: 41:03

Scripture: Matthew 17:14-18, Mark 3:1-5, Mark 9:17-27, John 14:13, Acts 3:1-10, Romans 12:3, Revelation 4:11

Topics: "People God Uses"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of having the right perspective in our faith. He uses the example of the disciples' inability to cast out an evil spirit from a possessed boy, and Jesus' subsequent success in doing so. The preacher emphasizes that when we view our challenges and obstacles in light of our own power, we may feel overwhelmed. However, when we shift our perspective to the power of Jesus Christ, we realize that nothing is too difficult for Him. The preacher also highlights the story of Elisha's servant, who initially saw the Syrian army surrounding the city and felt hopeless, but then had his eyes opened to see the angels of the Lord surrounding the enemy. This story serves as a reminder that God's power is greater than any human difficulty we may face. The sermon concludes with the encouragement to look to God, believe in His promises, and live our lives to please Him.

Transcript

Let's turn now to the book of Acts chapter 3. Last week we were talking about being used of God as instruments to accomplish his purposes here on earth. Realizing that the very purpose of our existence is to please God. As the elders in heaven responded to the worship of the cherubim, declaring the worthiness of God to receive the glory and the honor and the praise that was being ascribed to him.

As they declared, for thou hast created all things, and for your good pleasure they are and were created. You're included in that all things. And you were created for God's pleasure.

And you will only find fulfillment in life as you live your life to please him. Live your life to please yourself and you'll discover emptiness and frustration. But live your life to please God and you'll find fulfillment.

God is pleased when we obey him. God is pleased when we put our faith in him. Now, we began to look last Wednesday night at the characteristics of the men that God used in such a mighty way in the book of Acts.

How I longed that God would use my life for his glory. I sort of joined with Paul when he expressed his desire that Christ be glorified in his body in life or in death. For me, he said, to live as Christ, to die as game.

And God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of Jesus Christ. And so Paul lived his life for the Lord. God used Paul in a powerful way.

Peter, John, the others, he used in such a powerful way. And I long that God can use me for his purposes in the accomplishing of his will here on earth. But we started to notice the characteristics of the men that God used.

And we observed immediately here in chapter three that they were men of prayer. For Peter and John were going into the temple at the hour of prayer when there was a certain lame man from his mother's womb who daily was carried to the gate of the temple, which was called beautiful, to seek alms from those that entered into the temple. And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms.

And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I will give to you.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and he lifted him up. And immediately his feet and his ankle bones received strength.

And he, leaping, stood, walked, and he entered with them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God. And all of the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew that it was the lame man who had sat at the gate, beautiful gate of the temple, seeking alms.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened unto him. And as the lame man, which was healed, held Peter and John, all of the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. Men of prayer, they were going in at the hour of prayer.

But we also immediately observed that they were men of faith. They believed in the promises of Jesus. We are told that without faith it is impossible to please God.

For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Many of us believe that God is, but not always do we believe that God rewards those who diligently seek him. Jesus had said to his disciples, and whatsoever things you ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son.

If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. A little while later he said, henceforth you have asked nothing in my name. Ask that you might receive, that your joy may be full.

And so Jesus gave to his disciples these wonderful promises concerning prayer. And they believed the promises. Faith, the men that God uses are men and women who believe the promises of God and stand in faith upon the promises.

He also had said to his disciples, the works that I do shall you do also, and even greater works than these shall you do, because I go to my Father. Jesus often healed those that were lame, the impotent. He said,

the works that I do you will do also, even greater.

And so they believed the promise of Jesus. They were men of faith. Peter and John going into the temple, the hour of prayer, when their attention is diverted from their going in to this man that is seeking alms.

As Peter called on the man to look at him, the man turned his outstretched hand, expecting to receive some coins. Peter said, I don't have any silver or gold, but what I have I'll give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

Jesus said, if you shall ask anything in my name. Now he declares to this man in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. That is the word of faith.

He spoke to this man the word of faith. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. Jesus often spoke words of faith to people.

In the synagogue in Capernaum, when Jesus came in on the Sabbath day, and there was the man there in the synagogue with a withered hand. And it immediately created a tension, because they were looking to see what Jesus would do, because it was the Sabbath day. Would he heal this man's withered hand on the Sabbath? That would be contrary to their traditions, to their interpretation of the law.

And so, Jesus said to the man, stand forth. And he looked on the crowd with anger, because by their traditions they would keep this man from experiencing the power of God in his life. And he said, is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do evil? Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to heal or to kill? And they couldn't answer that.

And so he said to the man with the withered hand, stretch forth your hand. That was the command or the word of faith. Peter had no doubt seen Jesus many times speak the word of faith to people.

Stretch forth your hand. To the man who was brought to him there in the home in Capernaum, he was carried by four of his friends on this stretcher. And when they couldn't get through the crowd into the house where Jesus was teaching, they climbed up on the roof, opened some tiles and let the man down.

Jesus said to this man, take up your bed and walk. The word of faith. They had seen Jesus speak the word of faith.

And of course, we know the man with the withered hand stretched out his withered hand and it was full. The man took up his bed and he went out. When Jesus came in Jerusalem to the pool of Bethesda there near the sheeps gate.

And there was the lame man that was lying there. Jesus said, would you like to be healed? And the man said, well, I have a problem. I'm lame.

And whenever the waters are troubled and I'm trying to get into the water, someone always gets there ahead of me. Now notice Jesus didn't come up and say, what's your problem, man? Yet that's what the man told him. He told him his problem.

Jesus just said, would you like to be healed? That's a simple question. Simple answer. Yes, no.

But he gave all the reasons why he couldn't. And I think that oftentimes we are in the same position when the Lord is asking, would you like me to do this? We said, well, Lord, you see, I really would. I have this

problem, Lord.

I mean, I tried and I've tried so many times and it seems like I'm always failing. Would you like to be strong? Oh, Lord, you know, I'm just so weak and I've just tried. And the word of faith, Jesus said, take up your cot and go home.

He spoke the word of faith. So Peter had observed Jesus over and over speaking the word of faith to people. And so Peter spoke the word of faith to this lame man.

He said, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. It was a command in the authority, the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Rise up and walk.

Then Peter took an act of faith. And this is really daring. He lifted the man to his feet.

Now, we are told or intimated that Peter was a pretty big guy. And he took and lifted this man to his feet. And I believe that that was an act of faith.

And I think it was an act of great faith to lift the man to his feet, because I'm certain that going through Peter's mind was what would you do if he falls, if he crumbles, if he collapses? What will you do? They'll immediately accuse you of mistreating and abusing a handicapped person. But Peter lifted the man to his feet, an act of faith. And immediately the man was healed.

Now, as a result of this healing, we read in verse 12 or verse 11, And when the lame man, which was healed, held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, that is, he saw the crowd assembling, he saw the response of the crowd. He saw as they were looking at him as though he had some great power.

They were ready almost to worship Peter at this point. And when he saw the response and the reaction of the crowd, he said to the people, you men of Israel, why marvel you at this? Or why do you look so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness, we've made this man to walk? Why do you marvel at this? Don't you worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Don't you worship the God who parted the Red Sea, who stopped the Jordan River, the God who delivered your fathers out of the bondage of Egypt, the God who created the universe? Why should you marvel at this? Nothing for God. And then secondly, the second question, why do you look on us as though it was our holiness or our righteousness that has made this man to walk? Then he explains to them, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his son Jesus, whom you delivered and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

But you denied the Holy One and the just, and you desired a murderer to be granted unto you. And you killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses. So Peter preached a abbreviated sermon to them, gave them a short synopsis of the horrible thing that they had recently done in delivering up Jesus and denying him as the Messiah before Pilate, choosing rather that a murderer be released unto them than Jesus.

And they killed the Prince of Life, but God raised him from the dead. And then Peter declared, and his name, ye shall ask anything in my name, Jesus said, I'll do it, and his name, through faith in his name, has made this man strong. So they were men of faith.

Peter is declaring it is through faith in his name. Men who had faith in the name of Jesus were the men that God was using. And then he went on to say, yes, the faith which is by him.

And here I believe is a real key. It is faith in the name of Jesus, but more than that, Peter said, it is the faith which is by him. Jesus had promised the disciples that he would respond when they would pray in his name.

When the disciples in the next chapter have been threatened as the result of this miracle not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, they prayed. And in their prayer, they asked the Lord to stretch forth his hand to heal. And that signs and wonders might be done by the name of Jesus.

So they recognized the power in the name of Jesus. You remember when Jesus sent them out, two by two, the seventy. When they came back, they were rejoicing that even the devils were subject unto his name.

In Acts 16, 16, it came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with the spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us and cried, saying, these men are servants of the most high God, which show us the way of truth of salvation. And she did this for many days, but Paul was grieved.

And he turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out in the same hour. The devils subject unto that name.

As Martin Luther wrote in that hymn, a mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing. He said the prince of darkness grim. We tremble not at him.

One little word will fell him. The power in the name of Jesus Christ, when used by faith. Now, there are those qualifications.

You do remember that there were seven sons of Sceva that got hold of a demon-possessed man and they said, we adjure you by the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, come out. Well, that kind of a relationship won't work. The demon-possessed man turned on these guys and tore them up, ripped off their clothes and they fled for their lives.

But, oh, the power of the name of Jesus, when used by his child and exercised in faith, the faith which is of him, Peter said. It's not only faith in Jesus, it's the faith that Jesus gives to us. The Bible tells us that God has given to each of us a measure of faith.

Paul writing to the Romans 12 verse 3 said, For I say through the grace that is given unto me to every man that is among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought, but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith. The disciples were called upon by a diswrought father to cast the evil spirit out of his son. They were unable to do so.

And as Jesus was coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration, the father and the son possessed by the evil spirit were there. And the father came running to Jesus, begging him to help his son. I brought him to your disciples, they couldn't do anything.

And so as the father was bringing the son, the evil spirit threw him on the ground. He began to wallow there and the father told how that the demon would often try and throw him into the fire. And Jesus cast

the demon out and the disciples came to him later and said, Lord, how come we couldn't do it? I mean, we've cast out demons before.

This one wouldn't respond. Jesus said, because of your unbelief, there was probably a manifestation of the demon power as it manifested itself when the father was bringing him to Jesus. And they were so overawed by the power of the demon that they lost sight of the power of the Lord.

And I think that that's one of Satan's tricks and oftentimes he gets us so awed by the power of darkness and the powers of darkness that we forget that greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. And sometimes I think that our faith is sort of shattered when we see the powers of darkness. As we look at our world today, we look at the culture and the society and we see the powers of darkness and how they are controlling the government, controlling the media, controlling so many things.

And we are sort of overawed. Oh my, look at the powers of darkness. And we forget we're serving the creator of the universe.

You see, we are looking at them in the light of our power, our insignificance, and we realize that we're no match for them. But if you look at them in the light of the power of Jesus Christ, they're no match for him. You see, it's all perspective.

It's all in how you're looking at it. When the servant of Elisha saw the Syrian troops surrounding the city, he said, Alas, Master, we've had it. Elisha said, Lord, open up his eyes.

He went out and he saw now the Syrian army surrounding the city, but he saw the angels of the Lord surrounding the Syrian army. What a difference that makes. No more is it, Alas, we've had it.

It's Alas, they've had it. And so we need to see things from that perspective, from the divine perspective, not from our perspective where it's so overwhelming, but we see it from God's power, God's standpoint. Jesus said it's because of your unbelief.

I say unto you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, remove from here to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you. No wonder the disciples said, Lord, increase our faith. But notice, he's not talking about size here.

So many times we say, well, mustard seed is just so small, you know, and just that much faith. No, it's not talking about size. He's talking about faith as a grain of mustard seed, not the size of a grain of mustard seed.

But faith as a grain of mustard seed. Now it is true, a mustard seed is very small. And when it is there in the ground, it can have big clods over it, buried there in the dirt.

But when the life comes into it, it can push through those big clods, those mountains of dirt, though it is quite small, and it can grow up into a bush as a grain of mustard seed. You can say to yon mountain, be removed. Now, Peter said, it is the faith which is of him.

In other words, Peter is not taking credit for the faith. He's not saying, I'm a great man of faith, folks. I'm here to demonstrate to you what can be accomplished when a man is a great man of faith.

I hear them touting people as men of faith. Peter said, it is the faith which is by him. He's not even taking credit for the faith.

But it is the faith which is by him. As Paul writing to the Corinthians concerning the gifts of the Spirit, one of the gifts that he mentions is the gift of faith, where God gives to you faith to believe and to trust his promises in a given situation. And there are times when faced with difficult issues, the Lord just gives you that gift of faith.

And how wonderful it is when he gives you that gift of faith. Well, God's going to take care of it. How do you know? Well, I just know he is.

And there are times when your faith is unshakable, but that's the gift of faith. That's not, well, boy, look at you, you know, man of faith, wonderful. No, no.

God gave me the faith. God put that faith in my heart. It is a gift of faith.

That's what Peter is saying. It is through faith in the name of Jesus Christ that this man stands here before you whole. The faith which is by him.

Faith that he gave to us. And so God gives to us on different occasions that gift of faith where we are undaunted. Paul writing to the Ephesians said, by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves.

It is a gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. And so saving faith, a gift of God.

It's interesting, God gives to some people and others. Evidently not. There were the two thieves by the cross.

One received the gift of saving faith. Lord, when you come into your kingdom, will you remember me? How did he know he had a kingdom? How did he know he was coming into a kingdom? All he had was a sign above the cross, said the king of the Jews. But it was a sign that was there in a derisive way, mocking.

And even the disciples of Jesus at this time were wiped out, discouraged. Their hopes for the kingdom were ending as he was hanging on the cross. Their hopes for the kingdom were dying with him.

And yet somehow this thief realized that though he was dying, he was coming into the kingdom. Had to be a gift of faith. By grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves.

It is a gift of God and not of works, lest any man should boast. Paul writing to the Romans. Chapter three, beginning with verse 23, said, For we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God being justified freely by the grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God.

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded by what law? Of works? No. By the law of faith.

The men that God uses are men of faith. They have come to put their faith and trust in the Lord. Where does the faith come from? Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

Your faith is increased as you study the word of God because you come to know him. You come to know that he is a faithful God. He is a God who keeps covenant.

In Hebrews we have what I call the hall of faith as we are given a list of those men in the Old Testament who by faith walked with God and accomplished so many things. We are given a list of many of their accomplishments through faith. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained the promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword.

Out of weakness were made strong. They waxed valiant in fight. They turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Women received their dead raised to life again. These all things, all of these things through the men of faith. But interesting, we are also told what happened to these men of faith because of their faith.

They were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others had the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings. Yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment.

They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute, afflicted and tormented of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and in mountains and in the dens and the caves of the earth.

They were not all healed. They were not all delivered. These men of faith, they all died in faith, not having received the promise, God having reserved some better thing for us.

They were afflicted, they were tortured, they were put to death for their faith. I believe that it takes much more faith to accept an affliction than it does to be delivered from an affliction. I think greater faith is always manifested when a person can accept what God brings along their path and continue to just trust in the Lord.

That takes great faith. The faith of Job when he received word that all of his children died in that accident, that all of his goods had been spoiled, that from a wealthy man with ten children suddenly he's bereft of his wealth and of his family. And as he falls on his face, he said, naked I came into the world, naked I will go out.

The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. That took faith.

Anybody could cry and murmur and complain and say, God, why, why, oh God, and could go on wailing over it. It took much greater faith to just say, the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Paul tells us concerning Abraham's faith in Romans chapter 4, he tells us he didn't consider his own body now dead, that is, he didn't consider the negative adverse circumstances. He didn't consider the impossibilities from man's viewpoint. Why? Because it's not an issue of man, it's an issue of God.

And therefore you have to rule out impossibility. Difficulty is always measured by the capacity of the agent doing the work. When God is the agent doing the work, any talk of difficulty is observed.

Behold, I'm God, is there anything too hard for me? He said to Jeremiah. He did not consider the deadness of Sarah's womb. And he staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief.

How can God ever do that? He didn't stagger, God said it. But being strong in the faith, he gave glory to God. He began to just thank the Lord and rejoice that God had given a promise of a son through Sarah.

Because he was fully persuaded that what God had promised, God was able to do. The keys to his faith, looking to God rather than to the human difficulties, looking at the promises of God and believing them to the extent that he was rejoicing and praising God for the promise. As we are told, it's the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

And then, fully persuaded, God's able to do it. See again, not looking at the human difficulties, but looking at the power of God. God's able to do it.

The men that God uses, the women that God uses, are men and women of prayer. And they are men and women of faith. Next week, we will look at what I believe to be one of the most important aspects and characteristics of a person that God uses.

And I think that if you desire to be used of God, this next characteristic is an essential. If I am to be used of the Lord in an effective way for his kingdom, it is absolutely necessary that I possess this next characteristic. It is equally important to prayer and to faith.

Father, we thank you for the fact that you do use men and women in the accomplishing of your eternal purposes here on earth. And Lord, we desire that you could use us, and so we yield ourselves to you, Lord, that you might work in us as you prepare us to be instruments through which you can do your work through us. And so, Lord, mold and shape us according to your will.

Fill us with your Spirit. Draw us close to you. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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