

Perspective - Faith Makes A Difference

Getting Started

Paul wrote, “for we walk by faith, not by sight—” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

A man brought his son to Jesus to be healed, because the disciples could not heal the boy. Here is part of the record of this event: (the [] are mine and added for clarity only)

“And Jesus rebuked him^[the demon], and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not drive it out?’ And He said to them, ‘Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.’” (Matthew 17:18-20)

With just these two passages of Scripture it becomes clear that from God’s perspective faith makes a gigantic difference within us and our circumstances. Paul tells us to set aside our trust in what we see and understand in this world, and its use as a means of determining how we should live. Instead we are to live by our faith in God, trusting in God to guide us as we go from moment to moment and acting in obedience to God’s guidance.

Do we want to live within the will of God? Then faith, trusting in God, and acting upon our trust in Him and His specific guidance within our circumstances, is the key. Our problem with this is two-fold.

First, if we are completely honest with ourselves, most of us have some question about whether this way of living daily is really possible. We’re not sure if we are capable of such things, and we may question if God really wants to be that bothered by everything we’re doing.

Second, perhaps hiding quietly and deeply within our mind and emotions is this sensation that we really don’t want to give up that much self-control of our lives. We may immediately push this sensation back and deny its existence, or just refuse to consider it further. Still it remains affecting our thinking, even if we are not aware of it.

Perhaps, many of us find that the more open we become to the idea of living each moment trusting God first and being obedient to His will, the more acutely aware we become of our failure to do so. We must remember that in Christ we are forgiven, so there’s no need to focus on the negative. Instead, we can focus on the amazing miracle of our freedom to enjoy living each moment with Jesus.

Now let's look at the well known passage above about faith as a mustard seed, and moving mountains. How many of us have moved any mountains, or seen them moved? Yeah, me neither.

So, are there limits to what can be done by faith? Are there things that are impossible to do with faith?

As some might have guessed, our perspective makes all the difference. If we read this passage from the perspective of the world, then the fact we haven't seen any mountains be moved by someone, simply by telling it to move, is proof that Jesus' words are false.

Jesus never lied in any way about anything He ever said. If we think anything He said is inaccurate then we can be sure the problem is with us, and not with Him.

Rather than addressing each part of this passage, which would be quite lengthy, please allow me to get right to the point for consideration. Who is the key actor within anything that is accomplished by faith. In other words, who makes the decision of what should be done and then makes it happen?

Because Jesus says, "...you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.", we assume that we are the primary initiator of any action. That is incorrect.

Mountains don't move because we want them to move. God is the one who decides that mountains need to move and then causes mountains to move.

The only reason we can be a part of whatever God is doing is because of our decision to accept God's forgiveness and salvation through Jesus. Jesus' life becomes united with our eternal-being, within our body, that we can manifest what God chooses to initiate and accomplish.

We then become the one who speaks the Word of God within the physical reality of this world. By doing so we are speaking out from the Jesus-Life Who dwells within us, and by the Holy Spirit Who dwells within us, we are led in what to say and do.

The only way any of us will ever move a mountain is if God wants a mountain moved. He leads us to clearly understand that's what He wants to do, and trusting God explicitly we say to a mountain, "Move from here to there". Then and only then the mountain will move.

The point is God must be the initiator and the power that causes anything we do by faith. We must understand what God wants us to do in order to be obedient. When we speak, our words must be the words that God want to be spoken.

Does this mean we receive the precise word-by-word message God wants us to speak. That can happen, and has happened many times. However, it would more than likely be a strong sense of compelling from the Holy Spirit that causes us to know God is going to move a mountain and He wants to do that through us. We will know what to do as a natural action and speak out what God wants spoken, whether it's an exact word-by-word thing or the precise intent of God spoken through us.

It's obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit that matters. There's no secret formula or way to say something. There's no secret handshake involved with God. It's about being in a relationship with God of unity, and living from the reality of that relationship as the only reality that matters.

The fact is, apparently God has not wanted to have any mountains moved in this manner as far as we know. The absence of this specific type of event does not nullify the words of Jesus. What is more difficult? To move a mountain, or to cast out a demon who has full control over a person?

How about curing someone of cancer? How about causing a person to speak who has no voice box? How about raising someone who has been dead and buried for four days? How about taking a person who is actually dead, even though they exist alive on the earth, and giving them Eternal Life that causes them to be truly Alive for the first time in their existence, and forever more?

Moving physical mountains is nothing compared to the miracle God has brought forth into Eternal Reality by making those of us who were dead become Alive in Christ, because we were willing to trust God and act on that trust. That is the greatest miracle that can happen on this earth.

So, you see your perspective does make a difference, and our faith really does make a difference. There are other ways to think about this passage.

A mentor of mine, waiting to die of cancer, once told me he finally understood this passage. He said that when Jesus said this, the primary way people moved from place to place was by walking or riding an animal. So, mountains were obstacles that were serious obstructions easily understood by everyone.

He said that this passage wasn't about really moving mountains, but rather that by faith the mountains don't matter any more. Why? Because if we know where God wants us to go, then our faith compels us to go there knowing that God will provide whatever is required.

There is nothing in my life that was clearly God's will for me, for which God failed to provide whatever was necessary so it could be accomplished. He always equips those He sends, whether we are sent for very small actions, or actions that the world thinks are impossible. For me there's been plenty of both.

My mentor wasn't wrong about the difference faith makes. His comments are shared as an added thought about faith in our daily walk with Jesus. The key point is, if God wants to do something through us then it can be done if we are obedient.

So hopefully we understand that our faith in God does make a difference. That should never be a question, but there are other questions we can ask.

How do we know how much faith we have in God? How do we know if we have enough faith?

Each one of us can ask ourselves a simple question. "Do I trust and obey God?" Let's explore that a bit together.

Who is smarter, us or God? Sure hope we're all answering, "God". If not, then hey, there are probably bigger issues than this question to visit about.

Ok, if God is smarter than us, then who knows what is best for us in every circumstance? "Of course, God does."

So, do we know what is best or does God? "Yes, God always knows what's best".

OK, if God is smarter than we are, and thus He knows what is best for us, then there's nothing better we can do than what God wants us to do. Right? It's absolute Truth. What God desires is His best for us. Not because He wants to control us. Rather it's because He Loves us so much!

God knows all things, so there is nothing better we can do for ourselves and others than to obey God in everything, and in every way. God is perfectly faithful to us in all that He wants us to do with Him: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As we consider this, please know that God really is good, all the time...

If we don't believe this about God then we are misguided within our most basic foundational thoughts where any trust in God is concerned. It may be possible some of us don't have an eternal relationship with God. Maybe we've allowed some negative events in our life to dominate our perspective about God, or perhaps we've never thought about this in such a way.

This is my perspective, and it may not be something we share in common. Everyone is free to think as they wish. My hope is all of us will consider this carefully. Including me, because there is always something more to learn within any aspect of our relationship with God. For me there's no question that God is Good all the time, and has always offered me His best. This, however, doesn't mean my choice was to always accept His best and obey. Far from it, unfortunately.

It's worth remembering that the choice is ours, as is the responsibility for choosing as we want. We can either change our perspective about God so it aligns with His Truth, or live a life on this earth that robs us of the true purpose for us being on this earth. The Truth about God will never change.

So, do we obey Him completely? No. That one's easy to answer unless our ego goes beyond the bounds of reality.

Do we obey Him in some things, some of the time? Yes...certainly hope so! Many or most of us who have received Christ within our eternal-beings probably do. Of course, some of us probably do a better job than others of us. Oh, and my intent is not to say my behavior puts me in the "doing a better job" group!

How Are We Doing?

There's no way for us to know how we're doing in people's opinion without mentally comparing ourselves with others. We are, however, not to be one another's judge, or even to be judging ourselves. Those things are not what we should focus on, because only God has a right to judge anyone.

"Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this —not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way." (Romans 13:14)

Still we have to discern whether or not our actions, or the actions of others, are in alignment with God's will, as God reveals His will to us. The scriptures help since they are clear concerning so many different aspects of what is, or is not God's will. This can be found throughout the Old and New Testaments.

In Matthew 7:1 is the record of one of the statements by Jesus while teaching crowds of people: "'Do not judge so that you will not be judged.'" Jesus said this while speaking to a large group of people in the country side.

Jesus also said, "'Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.'" (Matthew 7:24) This statement comes from a time when Jesus was teaching in Jerusaelm.

Confused? So often when we read the Bible to seek guidance we make a fundamental mistake. We consider a verse or verses out of their context. That context includes time, place, the current circumstances, and the intent of the one speaking just to name a few.

The judgement Jesus refers to in Matthew 7:1 is when we assume the authority to judge another person. This is done with a spirit of criticism or condemnation.

When Jesus tells the people to "'judge with righteous judgement'" in verse 24 He is not talking about the same type of judgement as verse 1 in Matthew 7. This verse concerns God led discernment that does not include criticism or condemnation, and is not done with a sense of authority over the person who is the subject of the discernment.

We are always to seek His wisdom, which comes only from the Holy Spirit Who has a complete and continuous knowledge of us, and through His role as our teacher about all things concerning God and His will. The Holy Spirit knows our past, present, future, and will always encourage us toward the best God has for us in all things. He's the only one Who can let us know how we are doing.

Now, why the difference between us all? Because of the difference in our faith in God. That is our willingness to trust God and act on that trust. There is no better way to understand this concept then within the framework of obedience.

To the degree we do not obey God we are essentially saying that we trust ourselves, someone else, or something else more than we trust God. Some of us may ask, "What about other people, institutions and other entities and the information we receive from them?" "Can't we trust any of them?"

When we trust anything, or anyone more than God we are demonstrating that we trust our decisions more than we trust God's Leadership. Then when we put our trust in action the evidence shows we are choosing to do what we've decided is best for ourselves, or what we decide we want to do, instead of what we think or know God wants us to do.

Our Thoughts Revealed

Why do we act this way? Because we choose not to trust God with our daily living experiences. This is because of our rebellious way of thinking that has its roots in our desire to control our own life. We want to be the owner of it and control how we live, think, and feel. Only God has the right to do so. As a result of seeking to be in control, and making decisions for ourselves our “faith” is weak.

Why? Because regardless of what we may believe, even if we’ve received Jesus’ Life, we are not acting like we trust God. We may say “Hey, I trust God, and no one can say otherwise!”

First of all, anyone can “say otherwise”, all they have to do is say it. So, we may need to get over ourselves.

Second, whether we trust God or not, if we don’t act on that trust we are acting as though we have no faith in God. Perhaps we’ve had just enough faith that we asked Him to forgive us and save us by giving us Jesus’ Life.

“Wait” we say, “I really do trust God. I know that He is smarter than I, and I know that what He wants is best for me. Jesus is Lord. I know this and believe it with all my heart!”

Then we should act that way. Quit acting like what we believe is not true. Jesus is absolutely the Lord of our Life, and everything else for that matter. From a practical perspective, however, He may not be the Lord of our current actions or experiences because of our choice to be disobedient.

Right now is the moment that matters. Right now our faith is either real and alive, weak and treading water in the ocean of activities we face, or empty and dead.

If, however, we trust Jesus and we’ve asked Him to forgive us of our sins, come into us, and be our Lord giving us His Life Eternal, this daily wrestling does not determine our eternal destiny. We may face difficult and extreme consequences due to our choices now, but absolutely nothing can separate us from God, Who is our Life.

Our Practice?

We often end up losing opportunities to act upon our trust in Christ. We lose the opportunity to grow in our understanding of God’s love for us, and our love for Him. Also those around us cannot benefit from spiritual growth that never happens, so they lose something as well.

We may assume that He is not giving us what we need, that He is making things hard for us, and that knowing His will is difficult. That’s because of our perspective about God. That perspective stands in the way of us experiencing all that God has for us right now.

The beautiful thing is that God really does love us, even though we are not doing what God wants much of the time. We can change that in any moment by changing our perspective. All we have to do is stop

trying to run our own life, trust that what God wants for us is always the best, and start doing what we believe God wants us to do.

It helps greatly to know about the consistent themes within the Bible. The Ten Commandments reveal our sins and need for God, as does much else in the Holy-Spirit-given Scriptures. How much we grow is not related to our knowledge about God, but how much we truly love Him is what determines how well we really know God Almighty; our Heavenly Father.

Sure we will stumble around trying to “walk by faith” just like a baby trying to learn to walk. Don’t worry about this because God is there to hold our hand as we take one step after another. The difference is that when we walk by faith we never let go of God’s hand, and thus He is the One leading the way all of the time instead of us.

In the world’s view a baby is successful when they take their first step by themselves without anyone’s help. In God’s view we are successful when we never try to take a step alone, without His assistance. Our perspective makes the difference in our understanding of faith. Our faith is what puts our trust in God into action.

Thus, the essence is, faith makes all the difference.