

MONDAY 13 June "2022 Faith" (Acts 3:16 & Hebrews 11)

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Around the world there are people whose TITLES describe their high position and earn them chauffeurs and security details and mansions to live in and provide them many privileges unknown to all the rest of us. Titles such as King or Queen or President or Prime Minister or Prince or Monarch or CEO. *But no matter how powerful the title, NO title has the power to do what happened in Jerusalem about 2000 years ago when a crippled man was healed simply by his great faith in the name 'Jesus' and the title 'the Christ' or Messiah... at least that's what Peter claimed.* Yesterday I left you pondering this miracle and asking what you would have concluded if you had been in the crowd that day?

So, let's rejoin the scene my friends, found in Acts 3. Peter is continuing his explanation to the people of what they see with their eyes but cannot understand with their minds. A man, they all knew had been crippled since birth, was standing, walking and even jumping around right in front of them. Many of them had seen him in his normal place, sitting on the ground begging, when they walked into the Temple area, today, through the gate 'Beautiful' only moments before. No one could deny that this is the same man, but his legs and feet are perfectly normal and he's jumping with excitement like a young child.

Peter had said to the amazed crowd: ***"By FAITH in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Jesus that has completely healed this man, as you can all see."*** (Acts 3:16) Well, it was true they could all see the healed man, but *not one person in the crowd could understand how faith in a Name, even the name Jesus, could heal a crippled man!* Do you understand it?

Friends, the reason I'm leading us through this unprecedented miracle so slowly is that this... **FAITH**... is the very core of Christianity. **A relationship with God through Jesus Christ is impossible without powerful FAITH!**

Jesus proclaimed this fundamental truth over and over. Here are just a few examples...

1. In John 3:17,18 Jesus said: ***"God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through Him. Whoever BELIEVES in Jesus is not condemned, but whoever does not believe, stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*** (John 3:17,18)

Now that is very clear, isn't it? **Belief is FAITH!** God's one and only Son is, of course, Jesus God the Son. Did you notice Jesus' very clear statement that people will be condemned "**BECAUSE they have not believed in the NAME of God's one and only Son.**" Because this follows the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16, I suspect you've read it many times, maybe even memorized it, but today I ask you to focus on that statement about believing in the NAME of Jesus! *Can you see this is exactly what Peter was trying to explain as the reason the crippled man was healed?*

2. Another time Jesus said: "**Very truly I tell you, whoever hears My words and believes in Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.**" (John 5:24)

A few days later as Jesus was teaching again on how we can gain eternal life, He said: "**My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life...**" (John 6:40)

3. On one occasion as the teachings of Jesus became more complex some who had followed him turned away and Jesus asked His disciples if they were going to leave also, but bold Peter answered: "**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.**" (John 6:68)

The identity of Jesus Christ is key my friends, in understanding what you are believing when you say you have faith in Jesus. Remember this was again reaffirmed when Jesus asked His disciples what people were saying about Him and then He asked them who they understood Jesus to be, and bold Peter again responded: "**You are the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God.**" (Matt. 16:16) Jesus affirmed that this truth had been revealed to Peter by His Father in heaven and Jesus went on to say that it would be on this unwavering, powerful truth that "**I will build My Church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.**" (Matt. 16:18)

So now let's go back to the crowd in Jerusalem who are gathered around Peter and the healed crippled man who is standing for the first time in his life, and occasionally jumping up and down, since he's never jumped before! Do we understand now that Peter was saying what Jesus had been saying... *it all hinges on FAITH!* But having faith in Jesus when He's with you and speaking to you and doing miracles you can watch is one thing, but having FAITH in Jesus when He's NOT visibly with you, and you are NOT hearing His audible voice, now that's something different isn't it? But that's the faith you and I are called to live everyday isn't it my friends?

For the people listening to Peter and looking at the healed crippled, most of them had probably seen Jesus, perhaps many times. Most had probably heard Jesus speak or maybe even actually seen Jesus perform a miracle.

Some of them might have actually seen Jesus alive after His resurrection and a few of them might have been on the hillside as Jesus elevated into the sky. *So, the amount of faith Peter was challenging them to have was significant, but how do you compare it to the amount of faith God is asking you and me to have 2000 years later?* You see my friends, this is where the rubber really meets the road, isn't it?

But we aren't the first generation to struggle with faith. *Faith in a God we can't see, a God who does not normally speak in an audible voice, is faith God Himself enables us to have*, but the devil works very hard to counter that by challenging our minds and hearts to resist and to demand that the only things we can believe are things any of our 5 senses can verify by our touch, or taste, or sight, or hearing or smell. *Now ponder that a moment, my friends, it's the battle for your heart!*

That's why the writer of the book in our Bible we know as Hebrews was led by the Holy Spirit to write this: ***"Now FAITH is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see... and without FAITH it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to God must believe that He exists and that God rewards those who earnestly seek Him."*** (Hebrews 11:1,6) As we close today, I urge you to do something radical. *Take your journal and write a paragraph which describes what real FAITH is in your life.* The practical faith that you live with every day, believing your car will start when you turn the ignition key, or believing the sun will rise right on time tomorrow morning, or believing you'll wake up from your sleep, tomorrow morning. *Then will you write a paragraph which honestly describes what your spiritual faith really is?* It might help you to read or click on the link below and listen to the dramatized audio Bible reading of as much of Hebrews 11 as you have time for. That chapter is known as the great FAITH chapter.

FAITH my friends, is the cornerstone of life and a relationship with God is impossible without FAITH! So how strong and vibrant and active is your FAITH? And here's a great worship song that calls us to understand how to live great FAITH, in our day, 2022...

Today's Scripture is Acts 3:16 & Hebrews 11.